

DIY GUIDE

BOOK COVER DESIGN FORMULA

CREATE BOOK COVERS THAT
CAPTIVATE READERS



ANITA NIPANE

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CAPTIVATE READERS**

COMPLETE DIY GUIDE

Anita Nipane

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Why Do You Need to Buy This Book?

You know how hard it is to write a book. You have spent weeks, months and maybe even years writing something you truly care about be it a romantic novel or a self-help book. If you have a day job, then you had to spend your free time. Early mornings, late evenings, nights and weekends were devoted. Maybe you even had to steal your precious family time to keep writing. Don't let all this hard work go down the drain by using a poorly designed book cover, because it can be one of the most powerful tools for selling your book.

Think about how we buy books. Usually, we choose to buy a book because of one of these reasons: it is recommended by somebody we trust, it is released by one of our favorite authors or because it caught our eye as we were browsing a bookstore or Amazon. Oh, and sometimes a great discount or a free promo helps us to take the decision, too. Take a look at the results of [this interesting survey](#) to see the most common reasons we buy books. You will see that appealing book cover is one of the most important factors that influence readers to buy a book. Of course, the cover alone cannot make your book a bestseller. However, it's the marketing element that can significantly help you on the way.

There is a lot of information on the Internet about creating book cover designs: blog posts, YouTube videos, books, online courses... The problem is that most often they don't give a full step-by-step system for creating book cover design. You can find some bits of valuable information in a blog post, some— in a book, some more — in a YouTube video. In most case, the

information given is very fragmented. Therefore, you need to spend hours and hours putting all the puzzle pieces together and trying to figure out where to start, what steps to take and how to know the design concept to use for your book cover. Unless you read this book. Because I have already done that for you. I have spent months researching the best practices and book cover design principles so that I can explain them to you in an easy-to-follow way.

This book explains the best design practices, techniques and principles you can apply when creating your book cover design. However, *it is not* a step-by-step tutorial, because different image editing apps have different features. I cannot cover them all in this book. You will get the list of image editing apps instead in the end of the book. In case you want step-by-step instructions, I have recently launched my online course “[Ultimate Book Cover Design with PowerPoint](#)”. As my reader, you will get a great discount. Enroll in this course and you will learn how to use PowerPoint features to create professionally looking book cover designs.

I know... I know, for some of you, it might sound weird... PowerPoint and book cover design?!? But it's not weird at all. You will be surprised what you can actually do with PowerPoint, if you know how to... It's just a tool. Similarly, like PhotoShop, Adobe Illustrator, Canva, GIMP or whatever... You can create a crappy book cover with PhotoShop and amazing one with PowerPoint. And vice versa. Everything depends on your skills and know-hows... So, if you are interested, feel free to check out this course. Now, let's move to the next chapter.

Who Am I?

Why should you listen to me? In short, I have graduated art school, I have a master's degree in marketing and I'm a self-published author [with a bestselling book in its category](#); therefore, I'm versed in all the fields involved in the book publishing –design, marketing and self-publishing.

As an art school graduate, I know how the principles of composition and color psychology work and the influence that right typefaces can make.

As a marketing manager, I evaluate the job of professional graphic designers to make sure they create visuals that serve the needs of the business I represent. Therefore, I know how to evaluate a good marketing visual. And a book cover is your marketing visual.

As a self-published author with DIY book covers, I understand the struggles other self-published authors face. This is why I believe that I can help you and many other authors to be more successful and proud of their self-made book covers.

If you want to be notified when I publish new books, please [follow me on Amazon](#).

Why is the Design of Your Book Cover Important?

If you are reading this, then you already know that book cover design is important, and people do judge books by their covers. The main thing you need to understand is that modern ebook covers serve only one purpose: to get the reader to click on the book description. Because chances are, if they click on the book description and they find it compelling, they will buy your book. It works similarly in offline bookstores, too. If a reader notices your book cover, he will take it and read your book's blurb and maybe buy it. This is how your book cover can help you to make more sales. Because the only thing that matters about the book cover is its effectiveness in selling your book. Not what design concept you used, not how expensive the design was, not how much time you spent creating it.

So, where to get the book cover that attracts readers?

First, there is no guarantee that a book cover that is made by an expensive professional designer will make your book a bestseller. Likewise, there is no proof that your self-made and good-looking book cover will hurt your book sales. Whatever professional designers are claiming... Because although your book cover is a cardinal part of your book marketing, it's just a part of a big marketing campaign. Your sales also depend on your marketing tactics, size of the audience you can reach during the launch period, content of the book, reviews, price and so on. There are many ugly books that sell good and many books with beautiful covers that don't sell at all. However, it doesn't mean that you shouldn't make a great book cover.

If you are a self-publishing author and are starting out on a very low budget, a homemade, DIY book cover is a practical solution. Unless you make an appalling one, it won't hurt your sales. And after reading this book, it shouldn't be the case, because you will know exactly what steps and principles to use to create a good-looking cover.

When you already have sales, you can always ask a professional designer to improve your cover design if it's necessary. Because your book cover is not set in stone. You can change it. Of course, it's not so easy with printed books, but it's not a problem at all with ebooks. I have changed covers of my books several times already. It's no big deal. You can easily do it on all online bookstores, including Amazon.

Let me be clear, I'm not against professional designers. I do believe that they can do this job the best. However, there are cases when they are just not affordable. Moreover, not all designers do a great job. Believe me. I have met those kinds of designers while working as a marketing manager. You need to be very careful when choosing one. Because they can literally ruin your work and waste your time and money. So, read this book and educate yourself to be able to distinguish real professionals from weak amateurs.

I believe that a self-published author *can* create a good-looking book cover that drives sales. But you need to use the principles that are described in this book. These are reliable and time-tested techniques that will help you catch reader's attention and make more sales.

Who's Your Target Audience?

Before you start creating your book cover or even think about its general concept, you need to understand who your target audience is. Actually, you need to know that even before you start writing your book.

Answer the following questions:

- Is it a fiction or non-fiction book?
- What is the genre of your book: historical romance, thriller and suspense, self-help, cookbook, kids book, etc.?
- Who will be your readers: gender, age, their beliefs and interests?
- What are their professions and lifestyle?

A great source for understanding your target audience is Facebook groups. There are groups for almost every topic possible on Facebook: cookbooks, children's books, gardening, social media and even western romance. Type your keywords in Facebook search box and you will find a group that is relevant to your topic. Join them, participate and read their feed. You will find out what your potential readers are talking about and what is important to them. Go through the profiles of other group members. Open them and see who they are. How old are they? What is their gender? You will get some feeling and associations about your target audience.

You can also use Goodreads.com. Search for other books in your genre, read their reviews and the profiles of the reviewers. You will get an idea who they are and what they like. This will help you to choose the mood of your book

cover design by adjusting the colors, typefaces and images (if you are using some) to your reader's preferences.

Anatomy of a Book Cover Design

Front Cover

The three most important elements of your book's front cover are: title, subtitle and author name.

Your book **title** is the first (and sometimes the only) thing people read. So, you need to make sure that it communicates what the book is all about. Not only literally, but also visually by using typefaces that are appropriate for your genre. Usually, the title is the biggest element on the cover. Make sure it's clearly legible also when resized to the thumbnail size.

The subtitle may be helpful to clarify and compliment your book's title. It is Ok if it's not legible when resized to the thumbnail size. Because people usually read the subtitle in the description area.

The size of your **author name** doesn't depend on how famous you are. Look at the bestsellers in your category, whether the author's names are big. If they are, make your name big, too. It doesn't matter if you are not famous yet. Your readers don't know that. However, don't exaggerate. Usually, really big author names are used when the name is a brand itself and the book is published by authority and influencer. In these cases, the name of the author helps sell books. But you don't need to be too shy either and make your author name very small just because it's your first book.

Don't make all the text on your cover in the same size. It will look confusing. Use contrasts and hierarchy to emphasize the most important elements.

Usually, the text hierarchy looks like this:

Book Title

Author Name

Subtitle or Tagline

Other textual elements of a book cover are: review, blurb, best-selling author tag and version number, if applicable. However, be careful with writing “bestseller” on your book. You will increase the expectations of your audience. And if you don’t meet them, you will get negative reviews.

Back Cover

If you are going to publish a printed book, you will also need to design its back cover. If the job of the front cover is to attract the reader's interest, then the job of the back cover is to give him additional reasons to buy the book.

The main elements of the back cover:

- Short description or blurb of the book is the most important element and sales pitch that entices your reader to buy it. Keep your blurb around 100 words if you want it to make an impact.
- Use your headshot and make sure it is good quality and corresponds to the book genre. Don't use an academic photo for a children book or a casual looking one for an academic book.
- Your bio should usually be about three sentences long. Make it personal and adjust it to your book genre to connect with readers.
- Add book reviews, because they give credibility and are selling points for your readers.
- Allocate a place for International Standard Book Number (or ISBN code) and the barcode that goes with it.
- Place your company logo if it's related to the book.

Spine

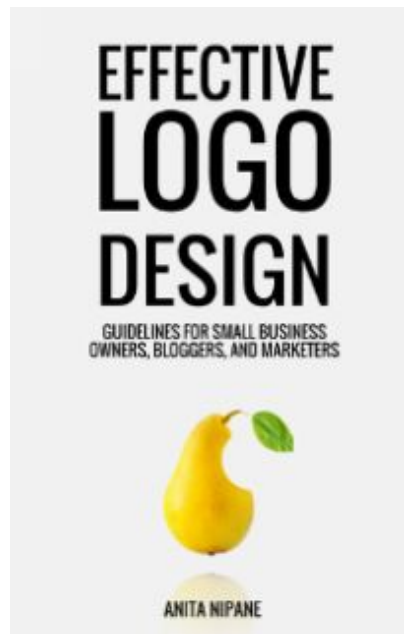
If your book has more than 130 pages, you will also need to use spine text that shows the main title and the author's name as part of the cover design. Make sure that it is legible and can be read sideways. The size of the spine area depends on your book size in general. You will need to calculate it according to the number of your pages like I explained earlier.

6 Design Secrets All Designers Use to Create Book Covers That Pop-Out

Now, let's move to the most creative part of this book. Have you noticed that all book cover designs can generally be divided into those that look well-designed and those that don't? Do you know why? Because the creators of the designs that look well-designed have used some basic principles that every professional designer know, but others don't. These principles are applied to all professionally designed advertisements, banners, posters, brochures, and, of course, book covers. There are many principles, but let's start with the four basic ones. Their acronym is CRAP which stands for: contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity. They complement each other; therefore, you will usually use several of these principles simultaneously. Now, let's take a look at them.

Contrast

Contrast is the most powerful design principle that is used for creating focal points and drawing readers attention. Moreover, it creates a hierarchy, and attracts the reader's eye to start communication. This is why the most important element of your book cover should be the most emphasized. The second most important element should be less emphasized, and so on. Since contrast helps to organize information, your reader will know where to look first, second, third and last. That will help you create the visual hierarchy and lead your reader's eye to the direction you want. For example, the main title of the book below is the “Effective Logo Design,” which has been emphasized the most.



You can achieve contrast in many ways:

- manipulate the space (empty vs. filled)



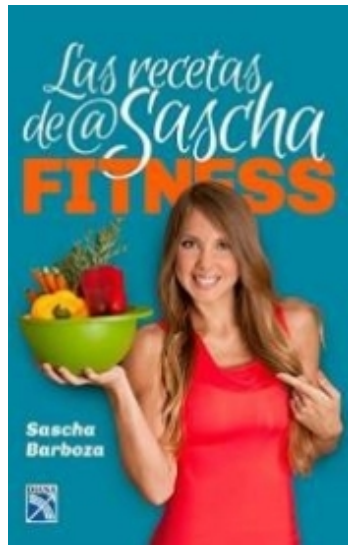
- by usage and placement of elements (isolated or grouped and bottom or top)



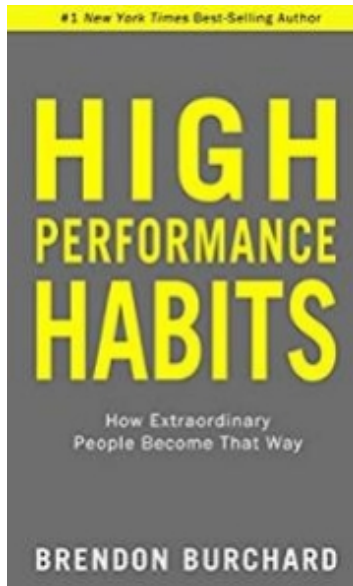
- through color choices (dark versus light)



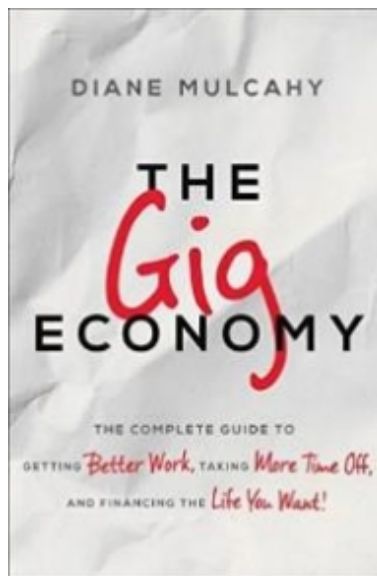
- cool colors vs. warm colors



- by size (small vs. big)



- by creating elements that are visually different from the other elements used in your design.



- by using typographic contrasts that I will explain to you in the chapter about typefaces.

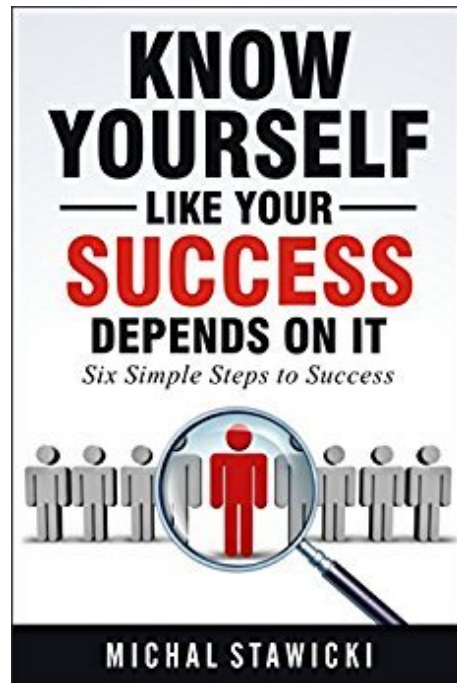
Keep in mind that contrast only works well if the difference between elements is APPARENT. If the difference is too small, it may appear to be more of a mistake than a deliberate decision. Create a big difference in order to differentiate two items from each other. You can't contrast 12px type with 11px type. You see, it looks like a mistake here. You can't contrast black with dark brown either. But if you lower the contrast, you can make an element to fade into the background. Therefore, you can use contrast to 'hide' certain elements of your designs as well as to give a special meaning to them.



Repetition

In simple words, the principle of repetition means that you repeat the same or similar design elements throughout the design of your visual. The purpose of this principle is to tie together separate elements of your design and give a sense of unity and consistency. While contrast is used to show differences, the principle of repetition is used to make sure that the design is viewed as a whole. The repetitive elements of the design may be colors, fonts, shapes, textures, spatial relationships, line thicknesses, sizes, graphic concepts, etc.

Repetition is especially important when it comes to multi-page design projects, like a brochure, a menu, a book, or presentation slides. However, it is also very important in a single page project, like your book cover. For example, if you have given visually similar characteristics to several elements, then you communicate that something is similar to these elements. Look at the book cover below. The silhouette and the word “success” both are in the same red color, which implies that being a personality in the crowd can bring you success.



Typefaces, style, and colors are repeated in order to create a united feeling and design, but contrast is used to create accents and draw attention to the book title.

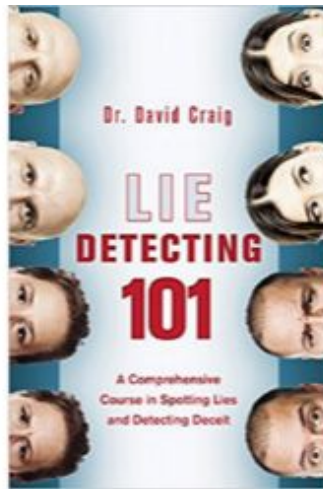
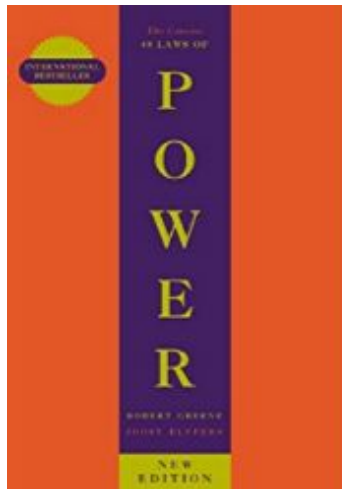
Alignment

The main point of the alignment principle is that nothing in your design should look as if it was placed there randomly, because alignment helps to unify all your elements (types, pictures and graphical elements) together into a strong and cohesive structure. Alignment makes information easier to read and allows you to scan visuals faster. Aligning your elements in a logical way also ensures that your audience reads your message in the right sequence, which increases the conversion rate. In general, there are four ways you can align elements in your design. You already use them every time you type something on your computer. However, let's discuss them from the perspective of design.

One of the easiest types of alignment is **centered alignment**. Usually, it is a popular choice for beginner graphic designers. The problem is, if you use centered alignment without creativity, it might look rather boring and won't create visual interest.



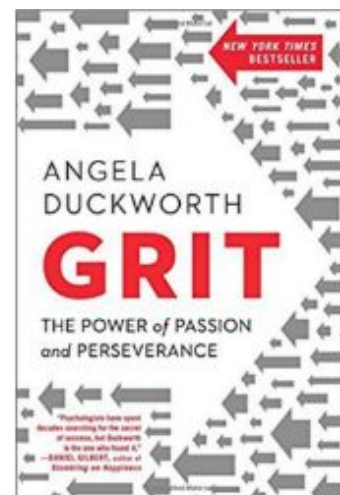
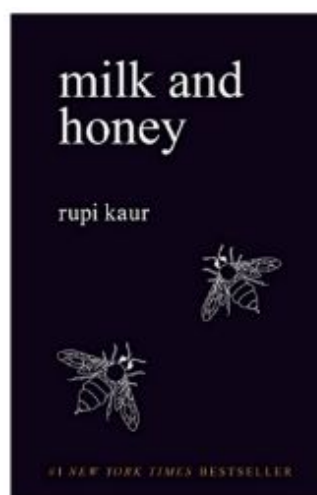
Look at the examples below. You can be creative with centered alignment if you use interesting formatting, colors, pictures and contrasts. Play with texts, shapes, colors and fonts to attract the interest of your audience.



Left Alignment means that text or graphical elements are lined up evenly with the left margin. A good practice is to use explicit lines. If you have an image or other elements with an explicit outline, align the text along with it, as shown in this example. You will create additional explicit lines that will be next to each other and create a powerful and interesting effect.



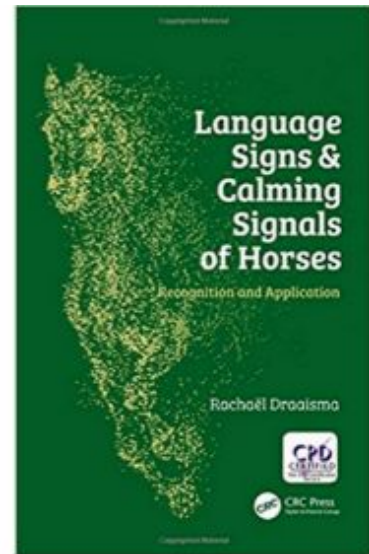
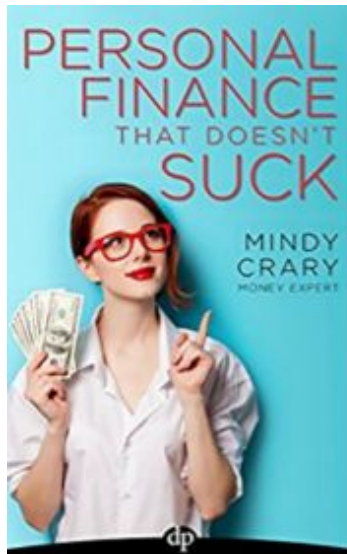
Look at these three books from different genres. Left alignment gives very clean and easy-to-read design. Notice how explicit lines are used - letter “L” in the first example and how the title alignment supports the arrow shape in the third cover.



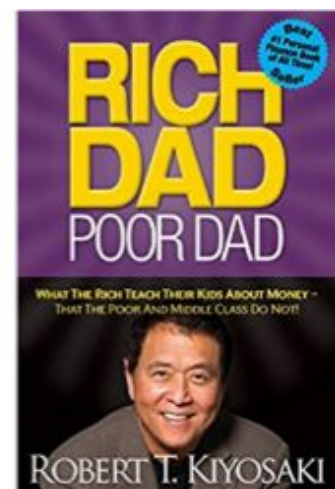
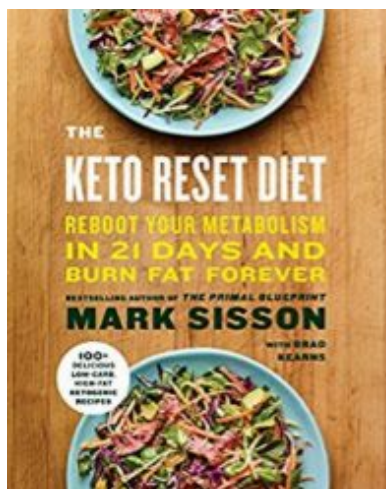
Right Alignment means that text is lined up evenly with the right margin. It is often used to give your design a unique and unconventional look. Right

alignment works well with short texts. But you should avoid using it on large paragraphs since it decreases readability.

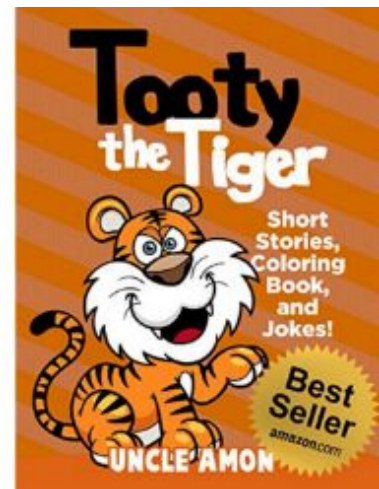
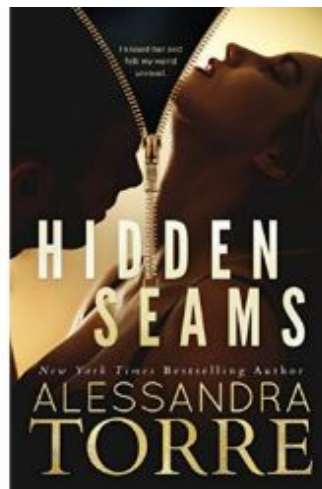
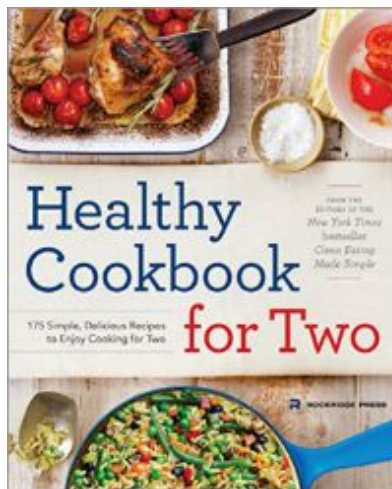
Look at these examples. The right-aligned texts are used to complement the background image.



Justified alignment is created by aligning your text evenly along the left and right margins. This type of alignment can give your book cover a more formal and organized look.



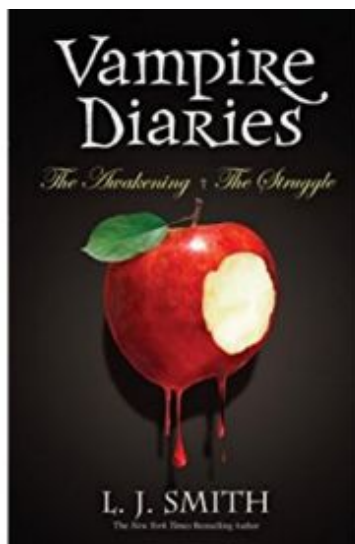
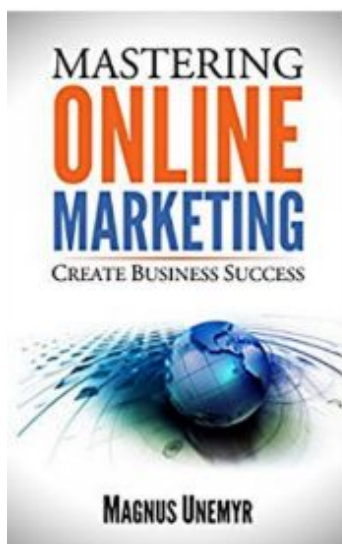
Of course, there are always exceptions. You can create beautiful designs without following the alignment principles I explained in this chapter. It *is* possible to mix different kinds of alignment and create beautiful and professionally looking designs like in the next examples. However, unless you are a professional designer with a good feel of composition, it is much safer to follow the rules.



Proximity

The main purpose of **proximity** is to reduce clutter, organize information, and give your reader a clear structure to improve readability. When you are creating your book cover design, be aware of where your eye goes first, second and third when you step back and look at it. Count the number of visual elements on the page and the number of times your eye stops. If your eye stops more than three to five times, consider grouping separate items in units to organize the information and reduce clutter. Because you need to have order to draw the eye. You can't have the title, subtitle, picture and author name fighting for attention. Decide what needs to be the boldest and catch your reader's eye first and what should appeal next.

Look at the book examples below. Your eye will stop 2-3 times to read the information. All elements are well organized. It's because the related elements and information are grouped closely together so that they become one visual unit.



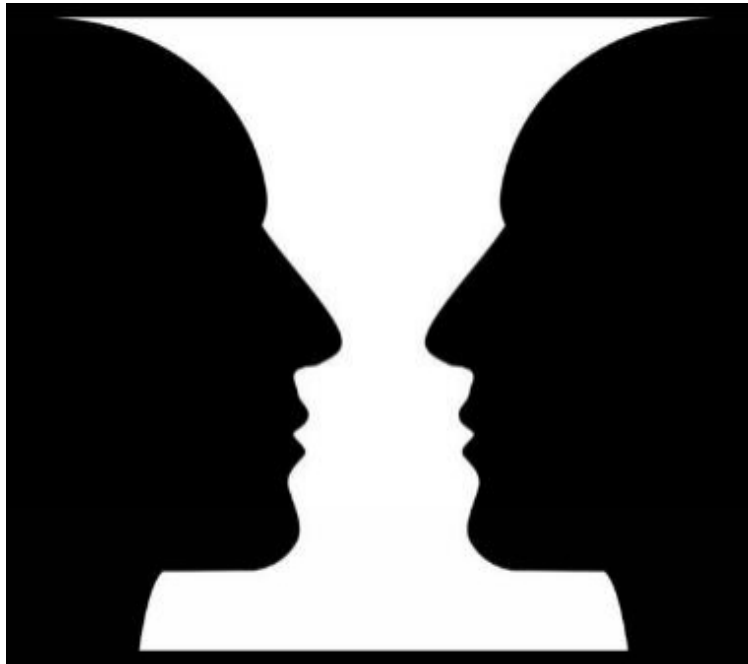
White Space

Each design starts with a white space. In the beginning, it's an undefined white space, which is what you get when you have a clean page or open a new document on your computer. When you put elements in the undefined white space, active white space occurs. It is an important part of every design because it helps make contrasts and emphasize the most important elements of your design. White space, also called negative space, is always a necessary element in any good design. Don't misinterpret the meaning. White space is just a term. Actually, it can be *any* color – red, yellow, black or whatever color or background texture you use in your design. In the example below, the white space is actually red. Its main purpose is to reduce noise and clutter so that focal elements of the design can be easily recognized and perceived.



With the help of the white space, you can mold and define what the positive space is. See a classical example of optical illusion below. This is how you

can create hidden elements and give additional meaning to the content. Like in this example, by creating two elements you actually get three elements. What do you see? Two faces or a vase?

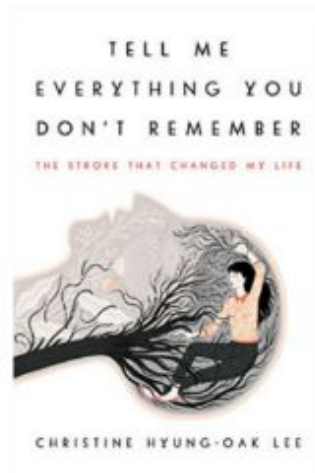
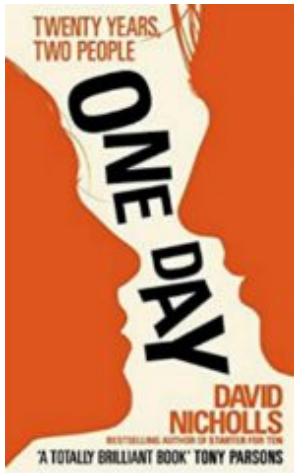


And what do you see in the next example – a flower or two dragons?



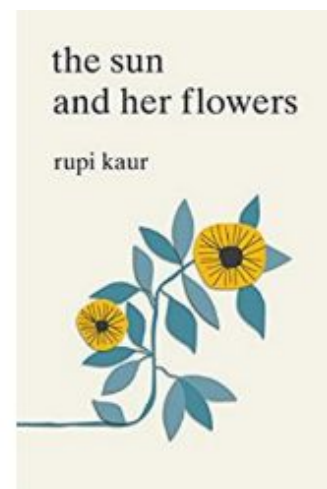
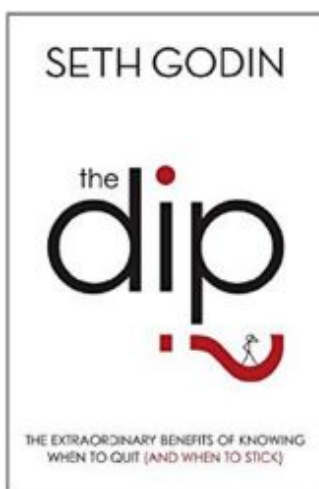
This strategy works great when creating a book cover, too. Using white space creatively, you can incorporate multiple meanings in your book cover design.

Here are some examples of great usage of white space for book cover design.



How to Create White Space?

1. Don't be afraid of empty space in your design and don't fill up your layout with text and graphic elements. The empty space is actually functioning as the white space and you need it to create a good-looking design.
2. To increase contrast around your focal points, consider scaling down all your design elements (graphic and type) or just a few of them.
3. Ask yourself if you really need all these titles, texts, and images on your book cover. By deleting the unnecessary elements, you can create a more focused and professional design. If you are not sure about the necessity of an element, most probably, you don't need it and it can be deleted.
4. Think outside of the box and experiment to see if you can create hidden elements, like in the examples below, that will give your design a really sophisticated look. However, remember that it is better to create a simple and easily legible cover than a too clever and complex one that is difficult to understand.



White space is very important in creating contrasts and focal points. Covers that have a lot of white space with a color/gradient background and a single image or symbol that illustrates a concept works well both: for fiction and non-fiction covers. Simple and minimalistic covers are more legible which is important for small thumbnail sizes in online stores.

Focal Points

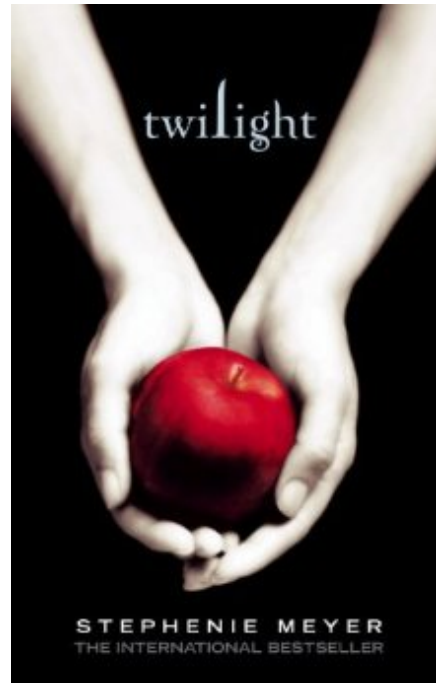
Most probably, while browsing a display of book covers on Amazon, you have noticed that some of the books pop-out while others don't. They somehow grab your attention and spur interest. Most likely, it is because these book covers have strong and effective focal points. In simple words, the focal point is an eye-catching part that stands out and is distinct from the rest of the design elements. Its purpose is to capture and hold the viewer's attention. Effective focal points are one of the key factors that define great book covers. If your book cover doesn't have a focal point, it can virtually go unnoticed.

Use these 6 techniques to create focal points and to ensure your book cover gets noticed:

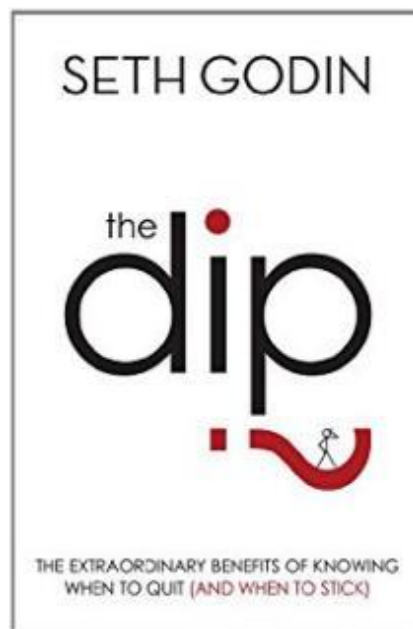
1. **Make contrast.** Use contrast to create a focal point. We already discussed the principle of contrast earlier. You can attract your reader's attention by manipulating the space, through color choices, by size, by creating elements that are visually different from the other elements used in your design and by using typographic contrasts.



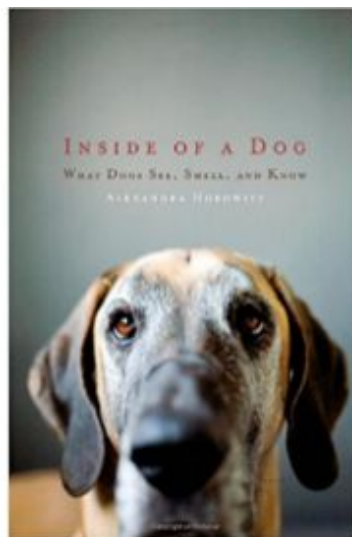
2. **Emphasize only one element.** Look at your photo and decide which object clearly communicates the concept of your book. Go from a general concept to something much more specific and concrete and emphasize only this one detail by removing all other elements that might be in the photo.



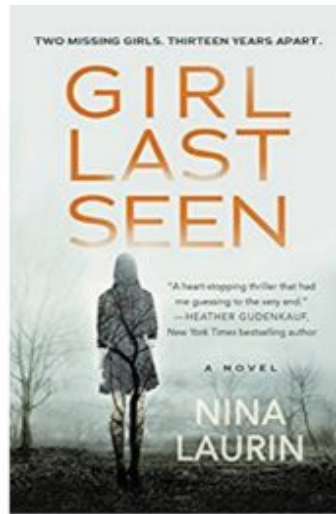
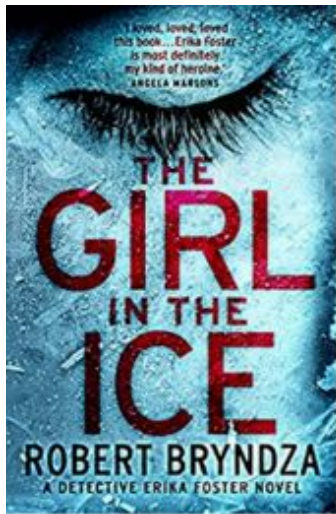
3. **Go extremely big.** Make one element on your cover extremely big. It can be either an image or text. This is a simple technique that can give a very professional result.



4. **Use Faces and Silhouettes.** We are social beings that are genetically programmed to be drawn to living beings. Therefore, images of eyes and faces (humans or animals) are much more likely to grab our attention. Moreover, facial expressions communicate emotions and feelings very well, which help set the mood of your book and trigger associations and fantasies of your reader. Since we unconsciously tend to make eye contact with other humans, we try to do that even when we see faces and eyes on a picture. Therefore, eyes and faces (human or animal) are some of the strongest focal points on book covers. Use them to your benefit. Look at the examples below. Most likely, your eyes are unconsciously trying to meet the eyes of the person on the cover.

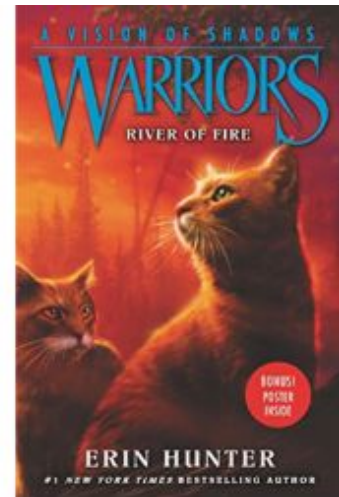
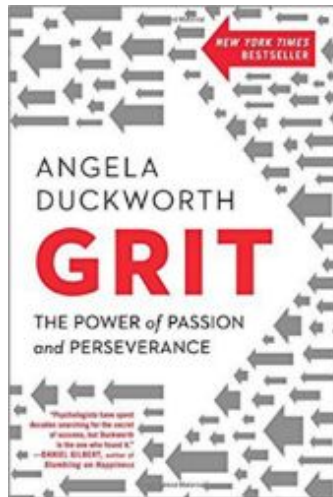


Adding a human face, a silhouette or even just a part of a human body usually improves the overall design. Don't show too much of your main character either. Let readers use their own imagination. Consider showing them a silhouette, from behind or only a small part of it like in the examples below.

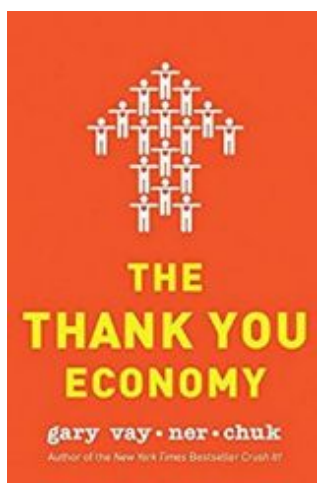


Don't think about a scene from the book or a specific moment from your story. It will be too complicated to design and most probably won't work anyway. Don't try to put all your characters on your book cover. You will create clutter and confuse your audience. Rather, use a nice background and add a simple character that is appealing to your target audience.

5. **Direct the Gaze.** According to studies such as [Eye Gaze Cannot be Ignored](#), human beings have a natural tendency to follow the gaze of others. Moreover, we have been trained since birth to follow arrows directing us to where we should be looking or going. In marketing visuals, it is a commonly used technique to lead the viewer's eye to specific information or an element. You can lead your audience's eye with the help of arrows, triangles and illustration or photography. If you use a face image, make sure the person is looking at your book title. Double the effect by using a gaze and a pointing finger.



6. **Use symbols.** Try to find a symbolic way of showing what your book is about. Utilize a symbol that anyone would understand at first sight. Use it as your book's cover focal point. If many other books have used this symbol already, present it in a different way like it's done on the "Thank you economy" book cover below, where human icons form the shape of an arrow. Symbols will help you avoid being too literal and expository with your design. Moreover, you will be able to represent a larger idea or concept. So, basically – less is often more. As you can see in the examples below, symbols work fine in both: fiction and non-fiction genres.



6 Easy-to-use Book Cover Design Concepts That Work for Every Genre

Full Bleed Images

The easiest technique for creating your book cover design is to use **full-bleed images** that extend or "bleed" to the edges of a page. The entire page will be covered with a picture and no white space around the edges will be left. In this case, the key to success is finding a good quality picture that is appropriate to your genre and sets the mood of your book. If you decide to cover the whole cover with the picture, make sure that there is an area for your text that provides enough contrast to make your title legible.



Midtone and patterned backgrounds will reduce readability. Therefore, increase the contrast between the background and text, and darken the image or brighten the letters (or vice versa). Consider covering your image with a color block to make the text area lighter or darker. In the first example below, I have left the background image as it is, in the second example – I have made it darker, but in the third –I have partly covered it with a gradient color block so you can spot the difference. Which one is most easily legible?



Rule of Thirds

The rule of thirds is one more simple technique for creating good-looking book covers. The basic principle behind this rule is to imagine that you are splitting the image into nine equal parts by drawing two equally spaced horizontal lines and two equally spaced vertical lines. According to the rule, important compositional elements should be placed along these lines or their intersections to emphasize the main areas of the design. For example, you can emphasize your book title or an element that symbolizes the concept of your content.

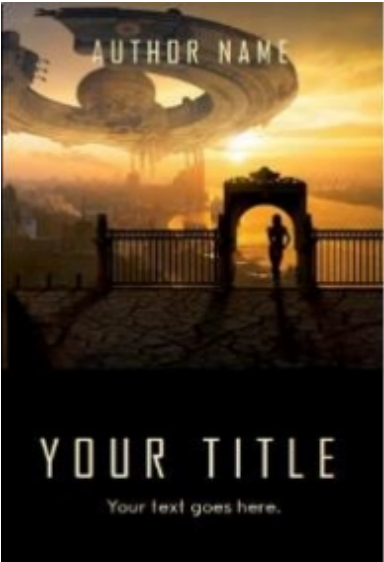
This is how the grid looks like. However, you don't always need to draw it. Once you know the rule, you can imagine the grid and use it intuitively.



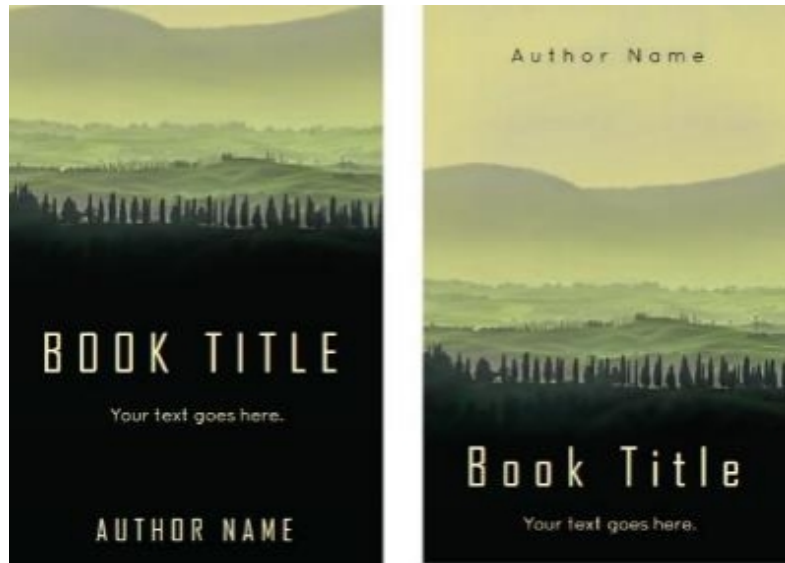
Take a look at the examples below. See how it's possible to make the picture more visually interesting by placing the main element along the intersection of the lines. Instead of a boring centered image, you can get a picture that tells the story.



One more way how to use the rule of thirds is to cover only one-third or two-thirds of the page with your image. Use the remaining space for your title and other texts like in the example below.

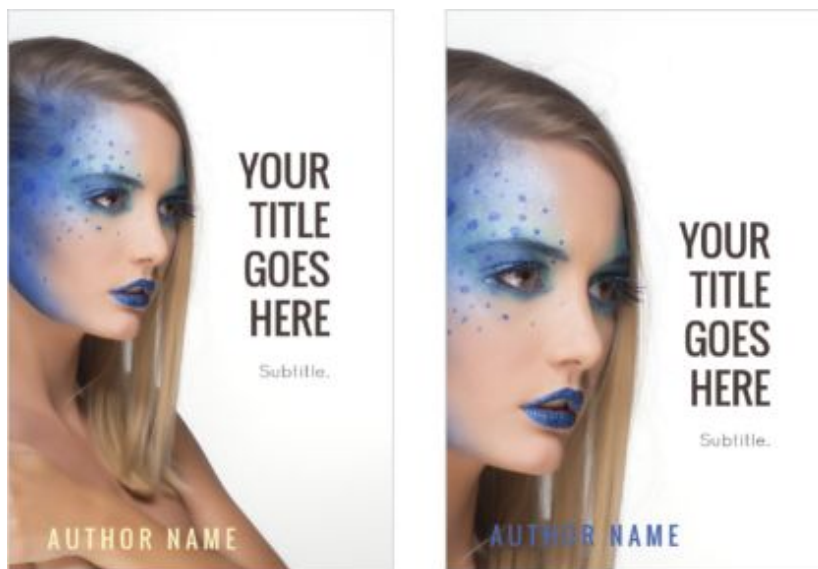


If you use a landscape image, move it up or down, until its horizon line falls at, or near, a divisional line of thirds. Before applying this rule, ask yourself what elements of your book cover design you want to emphasize and then place them according to the rule of thirds. By applying this rule, you can use the same image for creating different moods for your book cover.



Use Cropped Images

After you have chosen the image for your book cover, make sure you use it to the best advantage. You don't always have to use the whole image. Often, you will get a much more impressive result by using only a fragment of the picture. Crop your image and enlarge it to make it more eye-catching.



If your image contains more face than body (either human or animal), the eyes and facial expression will communicate emotion and feelings. As social beings, we tend to search for eye contact and reading emotions even subconsciously. So, this is a good technique to grab and hold the attention of somebody who is scrolling down the search results on an online bookstore.

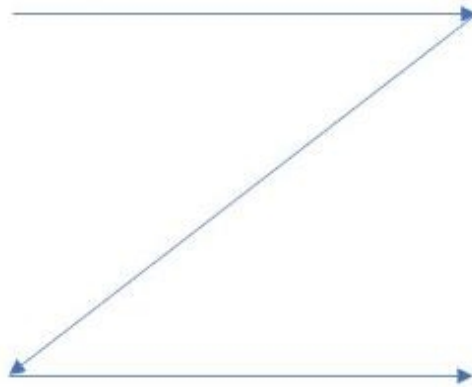


In order to highlight physical and bodily qualities such as strength, fitness, energy and vitality, use full-body shots or only some body parts. They will immediately communicate the main concept of your book.



Z-layout or Diagonal Scan

Z-layout refers to the route the Western people eye travels when they read — from the top left to the top right, and then diagonally to the left bottom corner to the right bottom corner, forming an imaginary letter “Z”. For other cultures, this principle works in reverse mode.



This method was discovered by a Dutch photographer and lecturer, Edwin Westhoff who studied many photographs, paintings and etchings to better understand the rule of thirds that we discussed previously. He discovered that focal points in many famous paintings were often placed precisely on the one or more diagonals of 45 degrees from the four corners of the image.



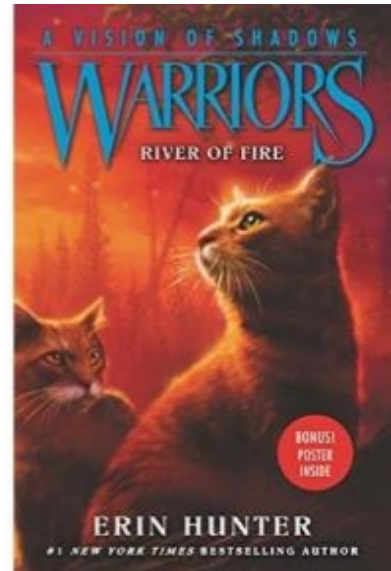
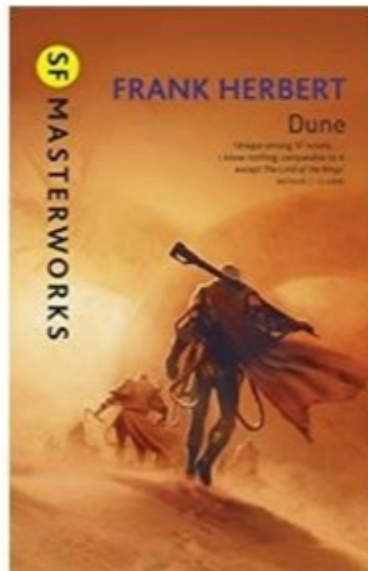
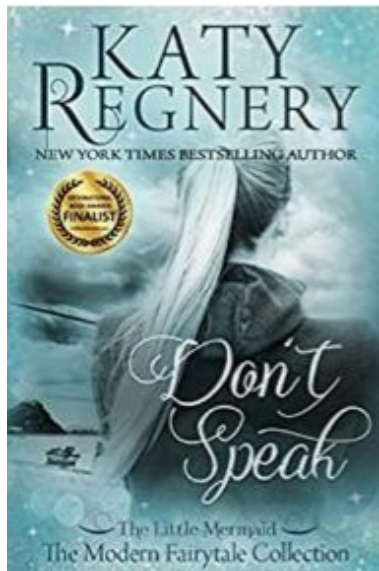
Manually placing certain elements of your design on these diagonal lines results in a better composition. This principle is widely used in advertising, because Z-layout ensures that audience will see, and better process important elements of an ad. Nowadays, due to the lack of time and abundance of the information, most often, people scan texts instead of reading. We rarely read every letter and word on advertisements, landing pages and book covers. Except we get really intrigued. This is why the Diagonal Scan principle is so important. The process of scanning the information should be made as easy as possible to increase the possibility that the texts will be read.

When reading (scanning) texts, people eye will naturally follow the path of the Z. Consider this rule when you are creating your book cover design and place the elements that you want the reader to see first along the top of the Z. Don't use elements and pictures that would lead your reader eyes to opposite direction to what he is comfortable with. The more effort is required to perceive the information, the higher is the possibility that they will skip it and move to another piece of information that is easier to assimilate. It happens subconsciously even without reading a single word.

If your picture is reversed, flip it horizontally so that it has the preferred upper-left to lower-right diagonal scan. Otherwise, it will lead the reader's eye away from the cover.



Look at the book covers below. It's clearly visible that the rule of thirds and Z-layout principles have been used for their design. There are obvious locations for the text in the upper and lower parts of the cover and the chosen images support the pattern with their diagonal lines. Therefore, you can clearly draw Z letter with your eyes.



However, it doesn't mean that you always need to use the Z-layout principle. You can create a powerful, centered design that has no diagonal movement at all. In this case, the diagonal scan is not necessary.

Flat Design

It's believed that flat design originated in the 1920s in Russia, Germany and the Netherlands, and became very popular in the 1950s in Switzerland and was called "Swiss Design". It became popular again in the 21st century, when two competing companies – Apple and Microsoft started using flat design principles for their product interfaces. You see examples of flat design every time you use your computer or smartphone. The flat design is widely used in web design and it is also used for book cover design.

In simple words, flat design means that you don't use any stylistic characteristics that could make your design elements look three dimensional. Drop shadows, embossing, gradients, photographs and textures are avoided. The advantage of the flat design style is that it feels crisp and modern, and emphasizes colors, shapes and typography. It gives a clean and modern feel by being minimalistic. To create effective focal points and grab reader's attention, contrasts and a lot of empty space is used.

The opposite of the flat design is "rich design", which is best described as adding design ornaments such as bevels, reflections, drop shadows, and gradients. You will need to avoid these effects if you are creating a flat design cover. Or you can create "almost flat design". In this case, you would combine the principles of flat design with some degree of minimal effects, such as a basic gradient or a simple shadow.

One of the most important elements of the flat design is a great and simple typography (particularly sans serifs) and iconography. You can get great flat icons for your book covers on websites: www.flaticon.com,

www.iconfinder.com, www.freepik.com and similar. Combine them with bold and contrasting color palettes. Keep in mind that your design concept should be minimalist and with as few elements as possible. Although it looks simple, creating a great flat design concept is rather difficult. You will need a lot of practice to master it.

Most often, non-fiction book covers are created in flat design style; however, there are also fiction books that have successfully used this design concept like a novel “Rich People Problems” by Kevin Kwan.



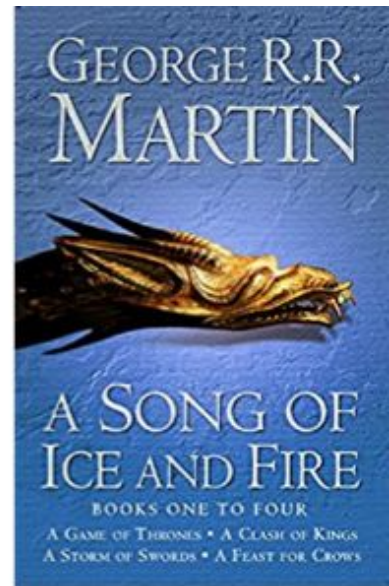
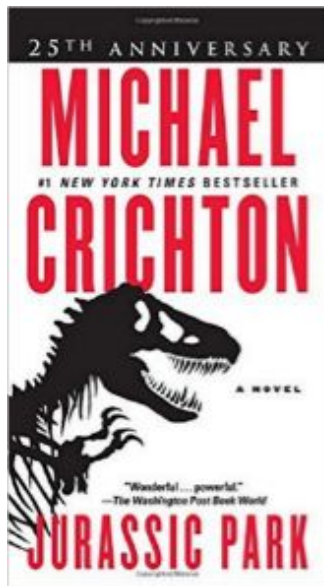
Use Symbols

Do you have a motif that's recurring in your book content? Is it a person, a symbol or a landscape? Whether it is a fiction or a non-fiction book, identify one powerful element that will represent the subject of your book and find a way to incorporate it into the cover. Don't try to make complicated book covers with a lot of elements, characters or by using a particular scene from your book. Coming up with a simple idea that is easy to understand is a much better option. It is more likely that readers will notice a strong, symbolic cover than a cover that has a complicated and difficult to understand concept. Especially if it is reduced to a tiny picture in an online bookstore.

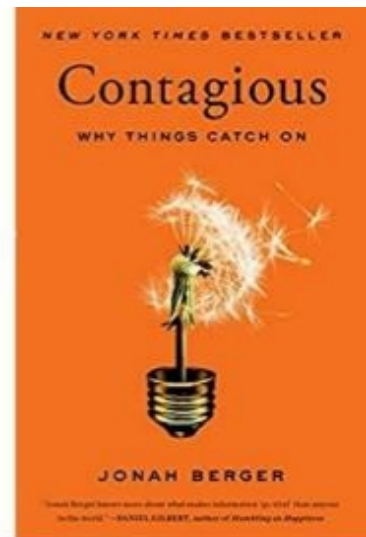
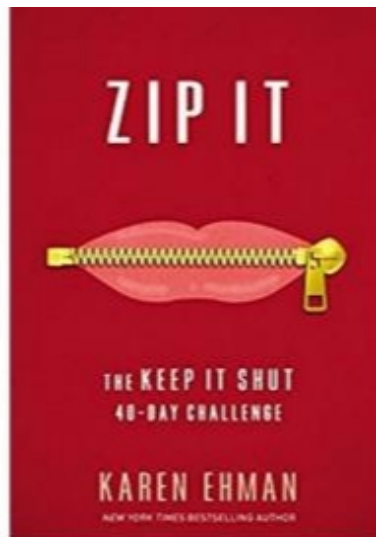
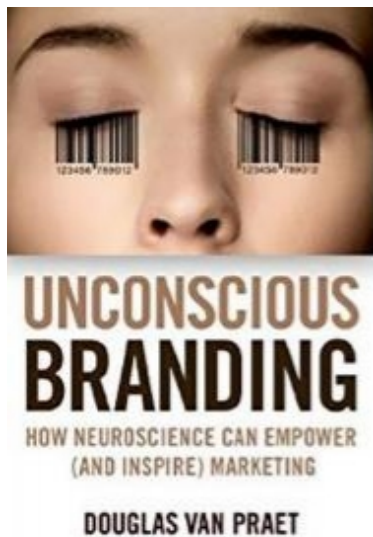
If you are using stock photos, it is rather difficult to find a photo that represents a specific scene, so refrain from this. The front cover is the first thing most readers see. They usually haven't read the book yet and the specific scene on the cover won't make a lot of sense to them anyway. Because they don't know the context.

Instead, keep the focus on a single symbolic image and use a lot of white space to not be overwhelming or confusing. Play around with layout and color to make it visually interesting. To grab the attention of non-fiction audience, combine symbols that are not usually used together and are unexpected.

Take a look at these fiction book examples that use symbols on their covers. Notice how actually simple they are.



Now take a look at these non-fiction books. By combining two symbols that are not usually used together, you can make your cover tell a story and pique interest.



What Book Cover Design Concept to Use?

There are so many different book design concepts to choose from. Some of them I explained you in the previous chapters. One of the most challenging steps in the creative process is to choose the main design idea. Should it be a full bleed image? Or should you cover only one or two-thirds of the page? Maybe you should use flat design style? So, how to decide?

It really depends on your skills and resources and how complicated designs you are able to make. If you are good at PhotoShop and using picture effects, you can work with layers and other complicated elements. If you use Canva, some limitations will apply. You may need to get along with a photo you could find on a royalty-free website. If you use PowerPoint, you can create great covers by using picture layers or flat design style. So, you need to know your capabilities first. If you know that you are not able to create a complicated design, look for easier concepts. Nobody said it needs to be complicated. If you research many best sellers, you will notice that most of the designs are actually fairly easy – great stock picture or icon and typefaces only.

To be sure that you are staying up to date with the latest book design tendencies, check out the list of the Amazon best-selling new releases.

Books: <https://www.amazon.com/gp/new-releases/books>

Kindle books: <https://www.amazon.com/gp/new-releases/digital-text/154606011>

Also take a look at these Amazon charts and book cover design trends. You will get some idea of what is trendy now:

<https://www.amazon.com/article/this-year-in-books>.

Readers have expectations about what books within different genres will look like, and it's your job to meet these expectations. One of the jobs your cover has to do is properly position your book in the market.

If you are a **fiction writer**, most probably, full bleed or two-thirds image is your best bet. You either create it from picture layers or find one on a royalty-free stock image website. However, keep in mind that the image you use on your cover must immediately communicate your genre and show whether it's a romantic novel, a thriller book, a western or whatever genre you have chosen. Moreover, it must arise emotions and fantasies, for example, romantic feelings, passion, fear, suspense, lust and other strong emotions. Because if your book cover doesn't attract the attention of your readers, they will leave for another book. You can achieve that by using a beautiful landscape, objects that symbolize your story or a human face with the right emotions on it.

If you are a **non-fiction writer**, then it depends on your genre. If it's a book about fitness or recipes, good quality photos are a must. If it's a business leadership or marketing book, you can create a great book cover by using the flat design concept. In this case, you would use only color blocks, icons and attractive fonts and formatting. One of the simplest ways to create a good quality non-fiction book cover design is by using bright colors, well-aligned and formatted texts and a simple central image that illustrates the concept. The image should catch the audience's attention and convey the topic immediately. Combining one to two obvious symbols or objects will embody the main idea of the book.

Again, similarly with fiction books, it must be immediately clear, if the book is about marketing, technologies, politics or recipes. Find out what the design tendencies of the bestselling books in your genre are and follow them.

Be simple. Put as little as possible on your book cover, use white space and focal points. Remember, that the legibility is a must.

Overcome Your Creative Block

Sometimes the most difficult part of creating a book cover design is... to start. We sit in front of the computer, stare at the blank page and have no idea what to start with. So, what's the first step?

Let's start with the easiest part - typing all the texts (title, subtitle, author name and other texts) that you are going to place on your cover. No need to format them yet. First, you need to decide on your design concept. But how to choose the right one?

According to Austin Kleon, author of the book "[Steal Like an Artist](#)": "If we are free from burden of trying to be completely original, we can stop trying to make something out of nothing, and we can embrace influence instead of running away from it". The idea behind this statement is that you do not need to try to be original. If you understand this, creating "original" and good-looking design becomes much easier. His book is a good read. Check it out, if you are serious about doing design.

We need to get inspired by good examples to trigger our creativity. Research 20 to 50 books in your genre. Note the layout, picture, fonts, and other elements of each cover. Which made you want to read them? You will notice some trends here. Choose the 1-3 book covers that you like the most and you feel that you are capable of replicating. Analyze them within the frame of the principles I described in the previous chapters: is it a flat design or a full bleed image; what CRAP principles are used; how about focal points and

white space; how about typography? Start designing your own cover trying to make it similar to the one you chose as your example. Don't be afraid of replicating. English author, William Ralph Inge said: "What is originality? Undetected plagiarism." It doesn't mean that you need to make your cover *exactly* the same. No. You won't be able anyway. It's not that easy. But you can be inspired by the concept and add your own personality to it. Moreover, choosing to replicate one concept will actually trigger your creativity. By placing some constraints on yourself, you will get over the creative block and will start to generate your own ideas. It may sound contradictory, but when it comes to creative work, limitations inspire creativity. If you want to experiment with several concepts, try to replicate several best sellers. Then choose the result you like the most. Or test which of them works the best. I'll tell you how to do that in one of the next chapters.

All graphic designers "steal" ideas from each other. It's a common practice. They learn from each other and adjust "stolen" ideas and techniques to suit their needs. Nothing is original in this world. You don't need to create something absolutely unique. Most probably, it won't work anyway. Moreover, keep in mind that if you want your book to become a best seller you need to make it look like a bestseller. So, use other book covers as examples and try to create your cover similar.

Buying Graphics and Images for Book Covers

Human brain is much more better at processing visuals than text. In fact, [90 percent of the information that our brain gets is visual](#). Moreover, [40 percent of people](#) will respond better to visual information than to text. Images and colors trigger emotions. If your book cover triggers the right emotions, it will create a connection and a desire to buy the book. Since we are emotional beings, emotions are behind almost every single purchase we make – from a t-shirt to a new car. Of course, books are no exception. This is the reason why the visual appearance and images used on your book cover are so important. If your book cover contains pictures or symbols, it will quickly communicate its genre and will create an emotional connection with your chosen target market. If the connection is made, the possibility that they will buy your book is much higher.

When you are looking for an image for your book cover, try to find one that fits your genre and set the mood of the book. Do not use cheap clip art on your book cover. I'm talking about the clip arts that come free with Microsoft Word and similar programs. However, it doesn't mean that you always need to pay for images. Check out this list of more than [60 free stock images websites](#). There are thousands of images that are under creative commons ([CC0](#)) and can be used even for commercial use without paying a dime. I'll explain the image licensing terms in the next chapter.

However, you cannot always find what you need for free. In this case, my most favorite royalty-free graphic resource is www.dreamstime.com. They offer good quality photography and vector images much cheaper than other

similar websites. Other good low-cost resources are: <https://depositphotos.com/>, <https://elements.envato.com>, <https://stock.adobe.com>. If you are looking for vectors, icons and symbols, check out: www.freepik.com and www.flaticon.com. Of course, there are many more websites that offer royalty free stock images. You can easily find them on Google.

Consider File Formats

Before you buy an image, check out what its format is. Photos usually come as jpg files, but vector files as eps files. If you are going to buy an editable vector image, make sure you have software that will be able to open and edit the file. There is no point to buy eps file just to find out that you cannot even open it. If you don't have Adobe Illustrator or a similar software, you can use Inkscape and GIMP for editing your eps file. It's possible to work with eps files also in PowerPoint. Watch [this tutorial](#) on YouTube to learn how.

Picture Copyrights Explained

There are three main groups of image licenses you should know about.

1. **Creative Commons (or CC) license** - is the most widespread Open Content licensing model. There are six Creative Commons license types. I won't list them all though, because you can read about the terms of each license in the official [Creative Commons webpage](#). The main thing you always need to check out before deciding to use an image for your book, is whether it can be used for commercial use and requires attribution or not. If the picture is listed under [CC0](#) license, it means that you can freely edit, distribute and publish it both for personal or commercial use. There are no rights reserved. Another popular license is [CC1](#). In this case, you can use the picture only if you give appropriate credit to the owner according to requirements. They usually are described in the site where you find the image. However, bear in mind that some rules still apply: you cannot use Creative Common pictures with identifiable people (face clearly seen) in a way that they may find offensive, unless they give their consent. If you use pictures with people, logos, private property, etc., make sure they are suitable for your application and don't infringe anybody's rights.
2. **Royalty-Free license** –allows you to use a picture without the need to pay royalties or license fees for each use. Basically, it means that you pay for the image only once and then you can use it as many times as you like. However, some restrictions apply. You cannot “borrow” a picture from a friend who has bought it, because this license cannot be transmitted. Only the account

owner who bought the picture, has been allowed to use it. Royalty Free licensed images can be used on book covers and in their interior. They can also be used on websites, for educational projects, in booklets, magazines, newspapers, flyers, games. In general, you can use them in any advertising and promotional material, in either printed or electronic media.

3. **Extended License** – if you are going to use a picture for creating either digital or tangible product that you are going to sell in big amounts, you will need to buy this license, which is much more expensive than the previous one. The examples of products are: web templates, greeting cards or postcards, print-on-demand services, like, canvas, t-shirts, mugs, mousepads and other similar products.

Bear in mind, that different royalty-free stock photo websites can have slightly different licensing terms. Always read them, before you buy the picture. If you are not sure, whether you can use it for your purpose, contact the website's support and clarify it. Be especially careful, if you are going to use the picture for erotic fiction or sensitive subjects like obesity, acne, bullying and similar topics. Some stock photo sites forbid this. So, always check the usage terms. And don't forget to print and save the license, in case somebody claims it.

How About Your Designer?

Whether you hired a designer for \$5 on Fiverr or for \$500 on a branded webpage, always ensure that the images and typefaces they used for your book cover won't infringe anybody's rights. Ask your designer to provide the license or the source of the image. "It's the designer's fault!" won't work as a

defense to copyright infringement. If you don't have a design agreement that addresses this issue, you are legally responsible for all copyright violations. Unfortunately, not all web designers understand copyright laws. So, you are the one who need to understand them and secure yourself from unnecessary risks.

Can I Steal It and Run Away?

If you “stole” an image to create an invitation for a family party, the chances you will get caught are close to zero. If you use a photo on the web, you are easily discoverable by using Google Image Search and other similar tools, like [Reverse Photos](#), [TinEye](#) and others. So, do it at your own risk and be ready to deal with consequences.

How to Protect My Own Design?

The most obvious and often overlooked way is to simply place the copyright logo (©) and your name at the bottom of one of the title pages in your book. It is also a good idea to write the statement "All rights reserved". In most countries, it is generally assumed that all the rights are reserved, but it never hurts to place this statement in your book, too. Just in case.

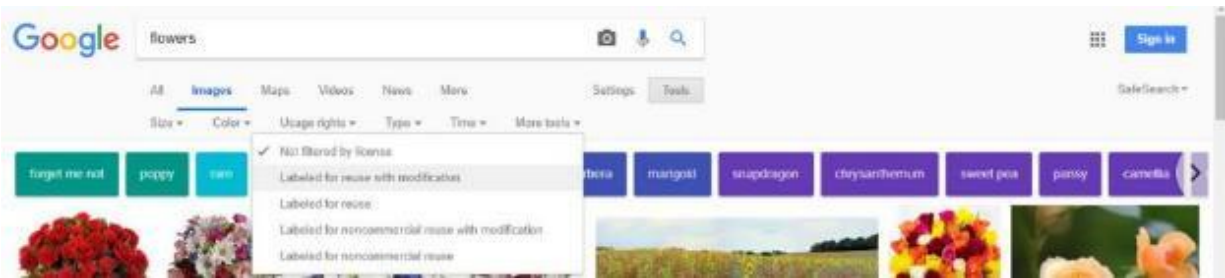
3 Reasons to Use Google Image Search

Before you have made the final decision regarding what picture to use on your book cover, search for it on Google. There are 3 reasons why you will want to do that:

1. **To make sure that your chosen picture is not used for another book in your genre already.** It wouldn't be fun to spend a lot of time creating your book cover just to find out that the same picture is already used for another book in your genre. If you see that your chosen picture is used in hundreds of blog posts, maybe it's also not a good idea to use it as the main image for your book cover. Unless you can use picture effects to change it or you are going to use only some part of it, so that it won't be recognizable easily.
2. **To find out if you can get your image cheaper.** Usually, the same pictures are sold on several websites. But each website has different price plans. Therefore, you might find out that the picture you want to use can be bought for a smaller price on another site. I have saved some rather good money by doing this.
3. **To test your chosen image.** I have often experienced situations, when I have chosen some beautiful image for my book cover, but when I start creating my design, I discover that it doesn't work as I expected. If you have already bought the picture, it turns out as a waste of your money. Not all royalty-free stock image websites allow you to download a picture copy in a decent quality to test it. To avoid this scenario, use Google Image search. Most probably, you will find the same picture in high resolution used on some website. Copy and use it for the draft of your cover. If it works, buy the licensed high-resolution picture. Therefore, you won't infringe anybody's copyrights.

How to Use Google Image Search Effectively?

Open Google in your browser and in the right upper corner choose “Images”. Then click on the camera icon in the search box. Either paste your image link or upload the image from your computer. You will get a list of all websites that are currently using the same or very similar images. Find the one that has the biggest size in pixels and use it for your draft. Similarly, you can search for pictures that are posted under CC0 license. Go to Images->Tools and choose “Labeled for reuse with modification”. This way, you will get a huge list of free photos you can legally use. However, be careful and read the license terms of each image anyway.



You can also do reverse engineering. It can be helpful if you don't want to search for your ideal image in many royalty-free stock image websites. Instead go to Google Image search and write your keywords in the search box. Google will offer you a long list of images from different resources. Choose the one you like and save it on your computer. Then upload it to Google Image search as a file to find out where you can get it – either free or for money. Watch [this video on YouTube](#) to get idea on how to use Google Image Search.

File Format and Size

Most bookstore sites accept JPG, PNG or TIFF. But you don't need to have several file formats for your cover. Simply use JPG, because it's the most widely accepted. Regarding the file size, you will need to stay under 2MB for being published on most online bookstores. If your file is too big, most probably your cover dimensions are too big, or you are using 300 PPI resolution, which is not necessary for web-based stores. Simply reduce the resolution to 72 PPI. It should be OK then.

What Image Resolution Should You Choose?

First, let's find out what image resolution is. In short, it is a term that is used to describe how many pixels are displayed per inch of an image. Image resolution is typically called PPI which stands for pixels per inch. Basically, it means that the bigger the number of PPI is, the better-quality image you have. If you need to use your image for a big print, you will need a high-resolution image like 300 PPI. But an image for your web page can have only 72 PPI resolution and still look great. You can easily check out the resolution of your chosen image by right-clicking its file in the file explorer, selecting "Properties" and then Details.



Digital Books

Resolution is usually not defined in ebook publishing, but the web standard is 72 PPI, so don't go under it. Although higher is better, having a 300 PPI picture might unnecessarily increase the file size. But many online bookstores have restrictions regarding the file size. If you use images in your book interior, feel free to use 72 PPI resolution to not make the size of your book file too big. There is no need to use 300 PPI in this case.

Printed Books

When creating a print cover, the resolution you choose is very important because it will define the quality of your printed image. And you don't want it to be blurry and muddy. Both Createspace/KDP Print and IngramSpark suggest a resolution of 300 dots per square inch (DPI) for your cover design.

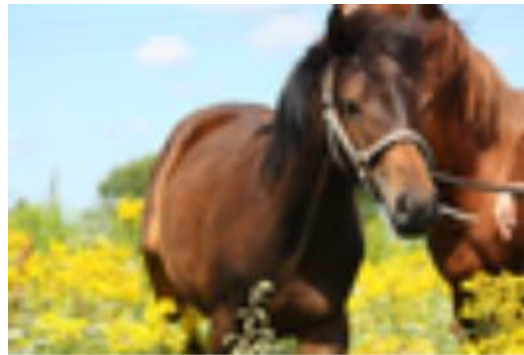
Stop, wait! We just found out what PPI is. What the hell is DPI?

Both terms DPI (dots per inch) and PPI (pixels per inch) describe the resolution (or clarity) of an image. However, they're not exactly the same thing. PPI describes the number of square pixels that show up in an inch of a **digital screen** (usually between 67-300). DPI, on the other hand, is a printing term referring to the number of physical dots of ink **in a printed document**^[1]. Usually, it's 300 DPI.

You can set your image resolution in PPI or DPI in your software settings. It doesn't really matter what you call the term. Basically, you need to know that the lower the PPI or DPI is, the lower the quality of your printout will be. And vice versa.

One more thing you need to know... If you are trying to fit a small picture (with a low resolution) onto a large cover, do not just drag the corners to make it bigger. It would reduce the image quality and you might end up with a cheap-looking result. Instead, try to find a high-resolution picture.

In the first example, I increased the size of the picture by dragging its corners. The picture was very small – just 100 px width. Therefore, now it looks blurry and of poor quality.



In the next example, I used a high-resolution picture. You can see the difference.



Why Are Colors Important?

Color plays a big role in creating the look and feel of any book cover design. With colors, you can influence the mood and message that your book cover conveys. Moreover, colors help create the contrast that is necessary to draw attention to your book. Most book covers look best with two or three main colors. Therefore, don't use too many colors to avoid clutter.

For example, if you want your audience to feel fear, use black, white and red, but if you want them to feel joyful – use yellow and blue as the main colors. Take a look at these two examples. It would have been strange if the kids' book had used the black, red and white colors and vice versa.

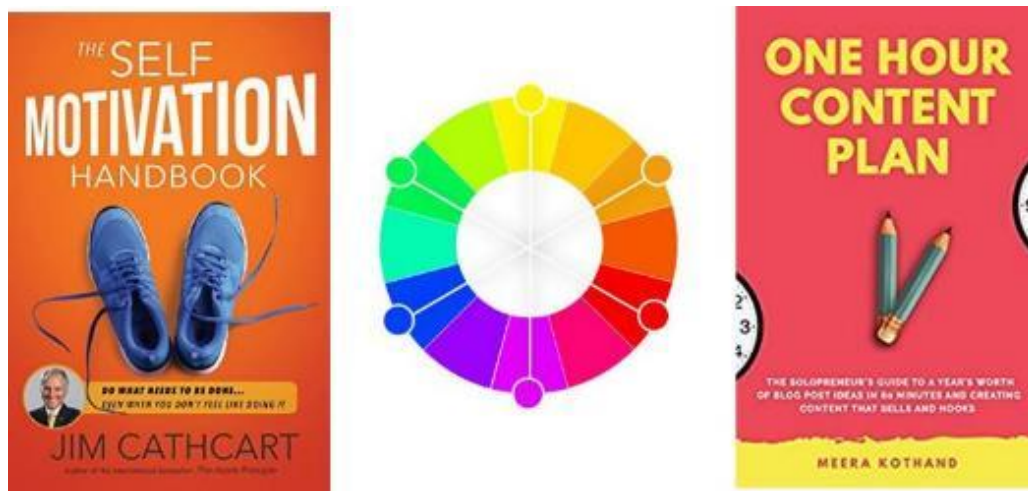


When you are creating your book cover design, bear in mind that [almost 93 percent of customers](#) make purchase decisions based on color and visual appearance. This is why choosing the right colors are so essential. Consider

your target audience (its gender, age, interests, beliefs) and find out what colors and their combinations work best for them. Get inspiration from other books in your genre.

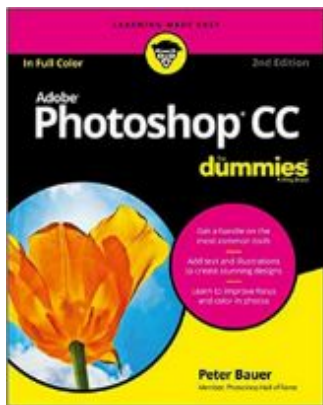
There are several principles used when new color schemes are created. You can literally calculate your colors by using the following formulas.

1. **Use complementary colors to make contrasts.** The colors that are positioned opposite one another in the color wheel are complementary colors. The color wheel is organized so that if opposite colors are chosen, then one color is always cool and the other always warm with the greatest contrast. When complementary colors are placed next to each other, they make the other color look more intense and brighter. Look at these book cover examples. They are very bright and contrasting and attract attention.

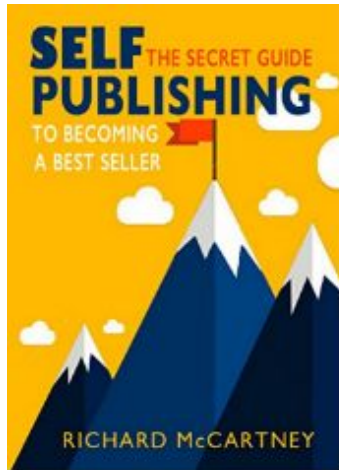


2. The **double complementary color scheme** is called tetradic because it uses four colors arranged into two complementary color pairs from either side of complementary colors on the color wheel. If you use all

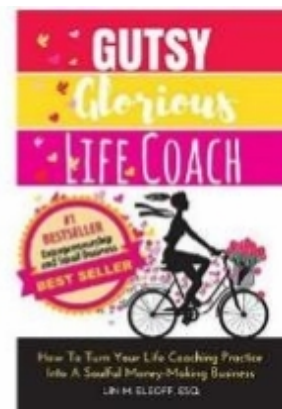
four colors in equal amounts, it will be difficult to harmonize them, and the overall impression may look unbalanced. Therefore, it is advisable to use one dominant color in your cover color scheme and the rest colors as emphasis and accents only. Additionally, avoid using pure colors in equal amounts. This is one of the most complex color schemes that provides a lot of contrast and needs good design skills to be used effectively.



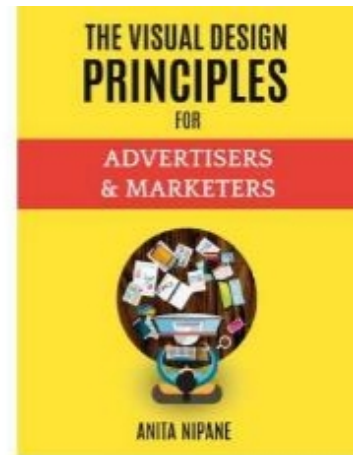
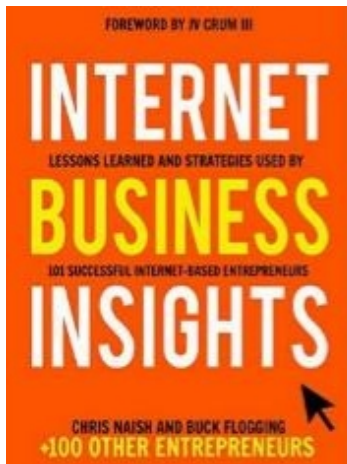
3. **The triadic color scheme** is a set of three different colors on a color wheel that are in equal distance from each other. Red, yellow, and blue are a triadic set of hues. Violet, orange, and green also form a triad, as do blue-violet, red-orange, and yellow-green and so on. Color triads are often used to create both contrast and balance.



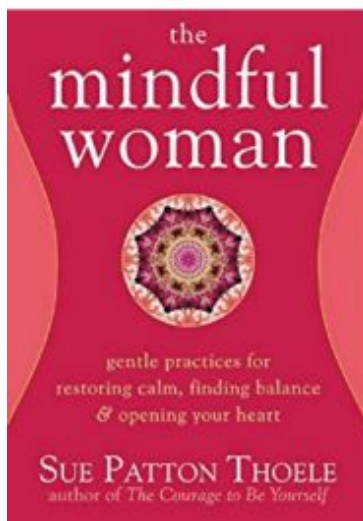
4. **The split complementary color scheme** consists of three hues. This palette is created by choosing a base color on the one side of the color wheel and then using the two colors adjacent to its complement, for example, yellow, joined by red-violet and blue-violet.



5. Combinations of three to five adjacent hues on the color wheel form **analogous sets**. All of the colors of this set are neighbors and near-neighbors on the color wheel. This is why you should create enough contrast by combining light and dark shades. A good rule of thumb is to use one color to dominate and a second to support it, but the third color – as an accent (along with black, gray or white).



6. Create a **Monochromatic Color Scheme** by taking any of the Hues and repeating it in various Tints, Shades and Tones. Actually, all grayscale images are created in monochromatic color scheme. But you can do it in colors, too. For example, choose Purple as a basis for your design project and then use it in tints, shades, and tones, creating as many variations as you need for your project. It is a very sophisticated approach and usually creates a calming effect.



Each hue of the color-wheel-based color schemes can be darkened, lightened, muted, or brightened. Play with levels of saturation within every color scheme described – soften or increase their brightness (make tints, shades, or tones) to get the result you want. There are nearly unlimited color scheme combinations available. Create your own color triads and experiment with the color schemes you can create.

However, try not to base your entire color palette strictly on the schemes I described. These guidelines are helpful as a starting point to help you find best color choices for creating contrasts and choosing colors. To avoid chaos and oversaturation, make one of your colors dominant in your palette. When you understand and gain the feel of how these color combinations work together (and which ones you prefer for yourself), you will have much better control over your final design. And most probably, the design will look much more sophisticated and professional.

Use Color Calculator

In order to ease the process of choosing color scheme for your book cover, play with [this color calculator](#). It is fully based on the 6 color schemes I just described. You just need to choose the scheme you want to use and play with the color wheel. The calculator will generate your color scheme and their codes: HEX, RGB and CMYK. You will need these codes to find and use the colors when you or your designer will be creating your book cover design. In short, RGB and HEX code are used when digital designs are created, for example, ebooks, but CMYK code of the same color is used for stuff made for print, like printed book covers. The codes are necessary to make sure that the color will look the same either in digital format or printed.

If while surfing on the web, you notice a color that you would like to use for your book cover, use this (or similar) [eye dropper tool](#) that you can install as a Google Chrome Extension. It will help you to get HEX and RGB codes of every color you select on the web. Therefore, you will save your time on trying to find a similar color in the color palette of your image-editing app.

If you also want to learn about other free tools that you can use for creating visuals, get this book: “[100+ Free Tools to Create Visuals for Web & Social Media](#)”. You can download it for free from my webpage.

Color Meaning

When you are choosing colors for your book cover, consider your target audience (its gender, age, interests, beliefs). Find out what colors and their combinations work best for your genre. You can get some insight about color psychology and meaning in the infographic that you will find in this chapter. However, don't forget that different color variations and combinations give different associations and feelings, so be creative and don't follow these general rules blindly.

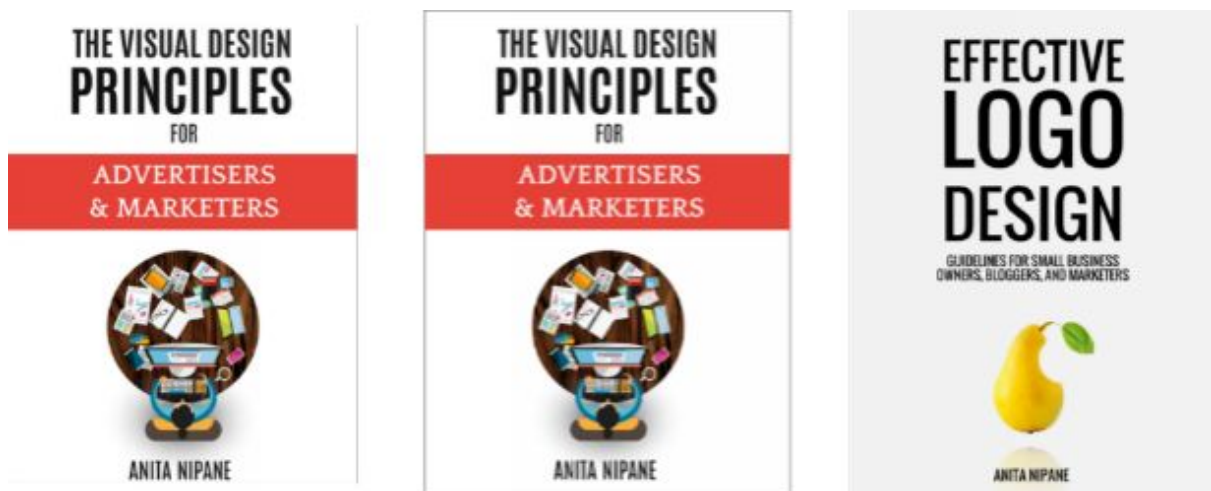
Color *Meaning* in Western Cultures



What Background Color to Choose for Your Book Cover?

There are several rules you need to know when choosing background color for your book cover. If you use a full bleed image for your book cover, you don't really need to worry about background color, because your image is your background. However, you still need to consider the overall color palette.

If you want to create the impression of simplicity, purity and clarity, use a plain white background for your book cover. However, since most online booksellers such as Amazon use white as their webpage background color, your white book cover will blend with the background of the search results page. If you don't use borders, they will literally disappear like you can see in the example below. It's not a good practice. Rather use light grey borders or an ashen grey or off-white background. It will still look as white but now will stand out against the background of the website.



To convey a sense of seriousness, suspense or authority, choose dark background colors like black or navy blue. If you need a book cover for a heartfelt story, consider pastels such as pale yellow or green.

When using images for book covers, the main colors that dominate the image will drive your color choices. You will either choose colors from the main image (cover on the left) to use them in the design or will choose the opposite or complementary colors to make contrast and emphasize the image (cover on the right).



Use your keywords to find on Amazon what colors other similar books use for their backgrounds. If there is a trend that everybody uses dark backgrounds, maybe you can emphasize your book by using red, green or blue as your main color. Or make some bright color accents to make your book to “pop-out” and attract readers in the search results.

Typefaces Explained

Most probably, you have heard two terms – “fonts” and “typefaces”. How do they differ? In simple words, the difference between a font and a typeface is the same as the difference between songs and an album. If we compare typography with the music world, then typeface is like an album, but fonts are like songs. Because *typeface* is the **font family** that makes up a design of type, but fonts embody a particular size and weight of the typeface. For example, italicized Arial at 12 points is considered a different font than italicized Arial at 14 points, and bolded Calibri in 18 points is a different font than regular Calibri in 12 points. In both cases, Arial and Calibri are typefaces, but the particular size and formatting of it are considered a font. However, the words font and typeface are often used interchangeably, but you need to know that technically the two are not the same.

Why is Typography Important?

Typography is one of the most important elements of your book cover design. A book cover usually has very few words on it, however, those words (title, subtitle, teaser, author's name) have a huge influence on your audience. The fonts you have chosen for your book cover can either improve its design or make it fail. Correctly selected fonts will communicate the genre of your book and arise relevant emotions like joy, lust, fear, anger or romantic feelings. It is important for attracting your audience's attention. But inappropriate fonts and their formatting will confuse your readers and convey unprofessionalism.

Nowadays, there is a huge variety of fonts you can choose from. That can be confusing. How to know which fonts to choose for your book cover design? Let's take a look at the main typography principles that you need to know for creating a professional-looking book cover design.

4 Typeface Categories

In order to understand how typefaces are categorized and what principles are behind their pairing, it is vital to have the basic understanding of the main type groups. They can be broken into 4 very broad categories:

1. **Serif or Roman typefaces**

A serif is a small line attached to the end of a stroke in a letter or symbol. Therefore, typefaces with serifs are called serif typefaces and most often are used in printed materials: books, newspapers, magazines, and formal documents. They will help your book convey a feeling of traditions, respectability and stability. Serif typefaces are broken into three subcategories, which are commonly used nowadays: Old Style, Transitional, and Modern.

- **Old Style** typefaces were originally created between the late 15th and mid-18th centuries and were mimicking the hand lettering of scribes. They look to be handwritten with a wedge-tipped pen. The main characteristics of this type are a moderate transition between the thick and thin strokes of a letterform, a diagonal stress so that weight stress is at approximately 8:00 and 2:00 o'clock in the thinnest parts of the curved strokes and slanted serifs. This is a good type group to use on a large amount of text because it makes it easy to read.



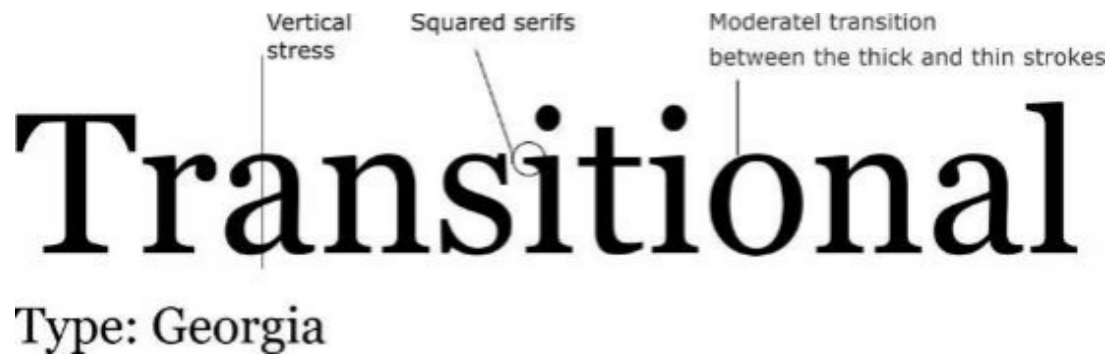
Few more Old Style type examples:

Radley

Garamond

Palatino

- **Transitional typefaces** were established by English printer and typographer, John Baskerville in the mid-18th century, because of the improved printing methods, which allowed much finer character strokes. Transitional typefaces represent the transition between Old style and the Modern period, and therefore incorporate some characteristics of each. They have a greater contrast between thick and thin strokes and wider, gracefully bracketed serifs with flat bases.



Few more Transitional type examples:

Bookman
Cambria
Century

- **Modern**, also known as Didone typefaces, were developed in the late 18th and early 19th **century**, when even more sophisticated printing techniques and paper were invented. They have thin, horizontal serifs, a radical difference between the thick and thin strokes of a letterform, and a perfectly vertical stress. These typefaces tend to look elegant and really eye-catching, but because of their structure, are also cold. Most of them are less readable than old style typefaces. Modern typefaces work well as headlines but are not good for body text, either on the web or in print. Because of their prominent thick lines, the thin lines almost disappear when used for body copy in print, and therefore an effect called “dazzling” occurs, which significantly reduces readability.

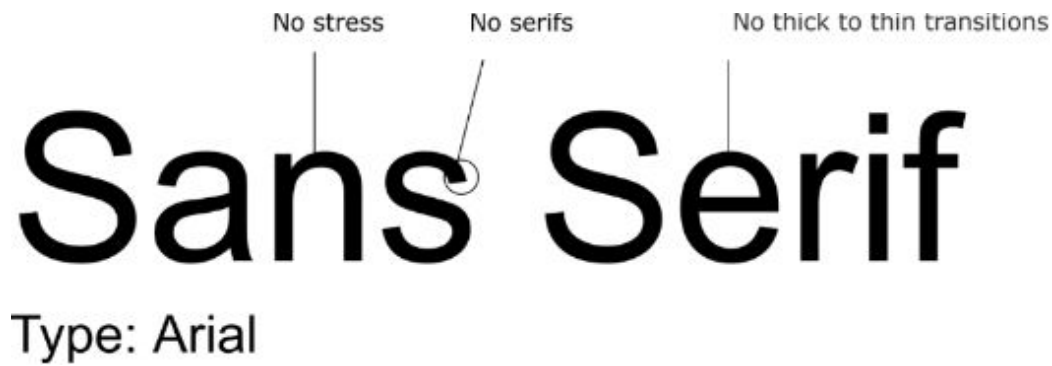


Few more Modern type examples:

Onyx
PLAYFAIR DISPLAY SC
Modern No. 20

2. Sans serif typefaces

The Sans serif term comes from the word “sans,” which in French means “without,” because these typefaces do not have the small serifs at the end of their strokes. Simply speaking, these are typefaces without serifs. They often have minimal variation in stroke width, creating the impression of a minimal, simplified design. Most sans serifs are mono-weight, but very few of them have a slight thick to thin transition. They are contemporary and rather universal. Often, they are used for body text, on-screen online as well as for book headlines and printed materials. The well-known [Arial](#), popularized by Microsoft, is a common Sans serif example.



Few more Sans Serif type examples:

Segoe UI
DejaVu Sans
Roboto

3. Script typefaces

These typefaces imitate handwriting. This category can be broken down into scripts that connect and scripts that don't, calligraphic scripts, scripts that look like they're hand printed, and so on. Be careful when using scripts – don't overdo them and never use them in all caps, because that would look annoying and disturb readability. Usually, they aren't used for body text because they are harder to read than many serif and sans-serif typefaces. However, they can be successfully used as an interesting accent and fancy design element for your book cover. Especially popular for romance book cover titles. In general, scripts are used for logos, invitations, displays, and headlines. They inspire feelings of elegance, grace and femininity and make the texts look more personal.

Script

Type: *Lucida Handwriting*

Few more Script type examples:

Bradley Hand ITC

Kaufmann BT

Palace Script MT

4. Decorative Typefaces

Decorative typefaces became popular in the 19th century and were used extensively on posters and advertisements. They are good for conveying specific emotions and are funny, artistic, and attractive. Decorative typefaces work great for eye-catching headlines but are not appropriate for body text, because that would be annoying and unreadable. It's advisable to use them in a limited amount.

Decorative

TYPE: **HotSweat**

Few more Decorative type examples:

AMAZDOOM

KOMIKA GLAZE

GUN METAL

Display vs. Text Fonts

You need to know that some fonts simply do not work on book covers because they are difficult to read, or they were never meant for display use. Why do some fonts work for covers when others feel inappropriate? It's because there are text fonts and display fonts. How do they differ?

Display fonts are meant to be used for headlines and displayed at a large size. Therefore, they're often designed to be engaging and grab people's attention. Their letter proportions, weights, spacing, set widths and many other tiny details are very different from text fonts. Display typefaces do not belong to a particular category of typefaces. They can be serif, san serif, slab serif, modern or script.

Text fonts are designed to be used in small sizes and for large amounts of text. There is additional spacing around letters, therefore they don't blend together even when they are very small. This improves readability of small texts. But if you enlarge a text type to use it as a big headline, it looks unpolished and unrefined, which gives a feeling of low quality. Look at these examples to see the difference.

DISPLAY TYPEFACES	TEXT TYPEFACES
Gugi Passion One Abril Fatface Patua One Chonburi	Verdana Optima Garamond Laurentian Minion

As you can see, display typefaces have more distinctive and expressive details, but text typefaces, tend to be more “neutral” in tone. However, it doesn’t mean that you cannot use text typefaces for your book cover title. You can, if you adjust them accordingly as I explained in the chapter about the main principles of perfecting a typeface.

There are font families that offer many versions of the same typeface: regular, bold, italic, thin, headlines (display) and other. So, you can use the same typeface successfully for body text and titles. Take a look at [Roboto Typeface Family](#) that comes in 18 styles.

Psychology Behind Type Choices

Look at the infographic below to get a general idea of how a particular choice of a typeface can arise different emotions in your readers. It's rather illustrative and good visualization of the concepts I explained you previously.

— THE —
PSYCHOLOGY
 BEHIND TYPE CHOICES



EACH FONT TYPE YOU USE FOR YOUR BUSINESS EVOKES DIFFERENT EMOTIONS.

Get the emotions you want people to feel when you select the right logo font.

SERIF



Tradition

TIMES NEW ROMAN

RESPECTABLE

TRAZAN

Reliable *Comfort*

BASKERVILLE

GEORGIA ITALIC

SANS SERIF



Stability

HELVETICA BOLD

OBJECTIVE

FRANKLIN GOTHIC

Clean *Modern*

CALIBRI

MYRIAD ITALIC

SCRIPT



Elegance

BICKHAM SCRIPT

Affectionate

EDWARDIAN SCRIPT

Creativity

LAZARUS

MODERN



STRONG

FUTURA

Progressive

ITC AVANT GARDE EXTRA LIGHT

Stylish **Chic**

DIDOT ITALIC

CENTURY GOTHIC

DISPLAY



Friendly

COOPER

unique

GRACEACE ROUND

EXPRESSIVE

VALENCIA

Amusing

ODYSSEY



Personas

<http://www.typepsychology.com>, <http://www.creativeplace.com/2011/12/13/low-psychology-of-fonts>, <http://thelogoagency.net/blog/psychology-of-fonts-color-logo-design>, <http://thepu.com/content/the-psychology-of-type>, <http://thelogoagency.net/blog/psychology-of-fonts-color-logo-design>, <http://handwritinganalysis.com/psychology-of-fonts>, http://psychology.wikia.com/wiki/psychology_of_fonts, <http://thelogoagency.net/blog/psychology-of-fonts-color-logo-design>

Infographic source: <http://worklad.co.uk/the-psychology-of-font-colors-infographic/>

How to Choose Best Typefaces for Your Genre?

Most probably, the first place where you will look for an appropriate typeface is your computer. However, most often it is not the best place to look for a good font, because the font selection there is rather limited. There are other resources where you can find great fonts.

First, decide what style of font (serif, san serif, script, decorative, display) will work best for your book cover and only search for that style. Don't look for a too fancy font though. Because the typefaces that work the best usually look rather boring at first glance. But they are easy to read even when shrunk down to the thumbnail size, which is one of the most important criteria. And you need to make your book title readable.

Many graphic designers give suggestions on what typefaces suit best for each genre. I have compiled these suggestions in a list of universal typefaces that can be safely used for books of different genre. Consider choosing one of these typefaces, because simple and familiar fonts build trust. The more familiar your readers are with the font you use, the more likely they are going to trust you. This is the reason why many designers use universal and classic typefaces for advertisements. They want to build trust. Like every other rule, there are exceptions, of course, however, a classic typeface is the safest choice. Especially if you are not a professional designer.

Take a look at the list below that I have compiled based on suggestions of several designers. These are reliable, classic typefaces that work well on book covers:

SANS-SERIF TYPEFACES	SERIF TYPEFACES
Microsoft Sans Ebrima FRANCHISE	TRAJAN Bodoni Baskerville
Futura Myriad Geneva	Garamond Palatino Cambria
Franklin Gothic Gill Sans Tw Century	Lucida Bright Vidaloka
Calibri Simplified Arabic	Minion Didot Book Antiqua
League Gothic Roboto Lato	Georgia CLASSIC ROMAN
Quicksand Oswald BEBAS NEUE	Euro Roman Goudy Bookletter
Antonio Corbel Futura Avenir	Libre Caslon Calluna Mrs Eaves
Museo Sans Acre Helvetica	

Of course, these are not the only typefaces. You can find many others that look similar to those listed here. Most of them are free. So, you can freely experiment with them to see how they would look on your book cover. Simply Google them. I'm also going to give you a list of 10 free font resources in one of the next chapters so that you can easily choose from a wide variety of fonts.

Here is one more extra resource created by Derek Murphy you may want to check out to choose the right font for your book genre: [300+ Fool-Proof Fonts to use for your Book Cover Design \(an epic list of best fonts per genre\)](#). You will find many fancy fonts here, too. Check them out if you don't want to use one of the classic fonts I listed previously. If you write kids books, here is [a list of 35 playful typefaces](#) you can use for your covers.

However, if you are still not sure which typeface to choose for your book cover, go to Amazon and research the best sellers in your genre to find out what typefaces they are using. You don't need to invent something unique or

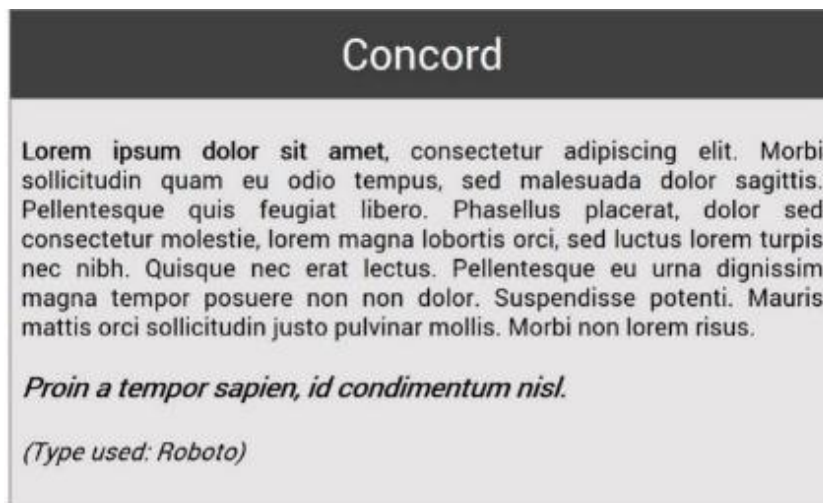
original. Simply follow the best practices of the industry and genre. Find the book covers you like, copy their images from the web and upload them to <https://www.fontsquirrel.com/matcherator>. This tool will identify the font used on that book cover or will suggest you a similar one so that you can use it for your book cover. Or use [IdentiFont](#) to find the most suitable font by answering questions about its key features.

Which Fonts Will Look Good Together?

New and amazing typefaces are invented every single day and the number of them keeps growing and growing. There are thousands of different typefaces with new ones being created constantly. It's easy to get distracted and select fonts randomly just by assuming that "they look good together." But are you sure? Actually, there are some basic guidelines that will show you what to look for when trying to find typefaces that complement each other. There are 3 basic principles that you need to know to guide you through this process:

1. Concord

If you use only one type family without much variety in size, weight, and style, a design is considered to be concordant. In the example below, I'm using one typeface, Roboto. Within the Roboto typeface family, there are several fonts: Regular, Italic, Bold and Bold Italic.



As you can see, the heading is larger and written in Bold Roboto and the body text is written in Regular Roboto. I have also used Bold Roboto, Bold Italic Roboto and there is some Italic Roboto in brackets. Overall, the design is very simple and neat. Nothing surprising or extraordinary, but a good approach, if you want a clean and formal design.

2. Conflict

If you use two typefaces that are similar, conflict occurs, because although the difference is subtle, it is noticeable, and your reader may wonder if it is a mistake. It might sound like it's not a big problem, but it unconsciously disturbs the reader and gives the impression of unprofessionalism. Therefore, make sure that the typefaces you are using are different enough from each other to avoid conflict.

Take a look at this example. This time I've put the heading in Gill Sans. Both Gill Sans and Verdana are sans-serif fonts and while they are a little bit different, they still look too similar. If you look at the first and the last sentences in the next example, you will notice that the typeface is different. Even if you haven't noticed that the heading and these sentences are written in a different type, most probably, you have a feeling that it looks like there have been some mistakes in formatting. Remember that when we are dealing with typefaces similarities conflict.

Conflict

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Morbi sollicitudin quam eu odio tempus, sed malesuada dolor sagittis. Pellentesque quis feugiat libero. Phasellus placerat, dolor sed consectetur molestie, lorem magna lobortis orci, sed luctus lorem turpis nec nibh. Quisque nec erat lectus. Pellentesque eu urna dignissim magna tempor posuere non non dolor. Suspendisse potenti. Mauris mattis orci sollicitudin justo pulvinar mollis. Morbi non lorem risus.

Proin a tempor sapien, id condimentum nisl.

(Type used: Verdana, Gill Sans)

3. Contrast

In order to create a contrast, use typefaces of different and contrasting style. This will help you to create much more attractive and eye-catching designs. The key is to find typefaces that are different but still have enough in common to look good together. It must be apparent that the difference has been created for a reason. You can pair a sans-serif font with a serif font or a fancy font with a classic font. In my example below, I have used Broadway BT type (in titles) combined with Roboto (in body text). This time it's apparent that the heading is written in a different font, which makes the design more attractive and eye-catching.

Contrast

Proin a tempor sapien, id condimentum nisl

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(Type used: Roboto, Broadway BT)

To sum it up, concordant typography is good and easy to create, but without a proper formatting, doesn't look very interesting. Don't use conflicting typefaces, because this combination doesn't look professional and creates a sense of mistake. If you feel that something is wrong with the combination of your chosen typefaces, make sure they are not too similar and therefore conflicting with each other. One of the most interesting choices is using contrasting typefaces because they look attractive and fun. Remember that the goal of combining several typefaces is to improve the communication, not to confuse your reader. Pay attention to your book genre. Every design needs a different typeface pair. The style differs based on the genre, for example, romance novel would have a different style than a business management book.

However, if you still don't feel sure that you will be able to find the best pair for your chosen font, check out these tools.

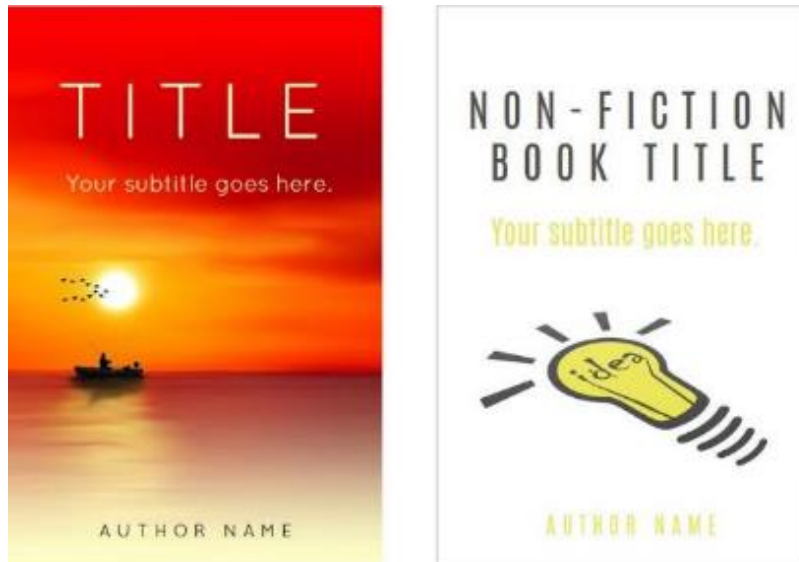
Tools for Font Pairing

- <http://fontjoy.com/> - generate new font pairings. Replace their text with your book title and tagline. Then choose from different fonts that are suggested for pairings.
- <http://www.typeconnection.com> – this is like a fun dating game for typefaces. Choose from one of their suggested types and then from four different strategies to find the best match for the chosen typeface. Enjoy the result.
- <http://typespiration.com> – check out this webpage to find free inspirational font combinations with color palettes made by professional designers.

Or check out [Font Bundles](#) where you can download beautiful typefaces that are already paired according to the best practices. There are both free and paid fonts available.

How Many Typefaces to Use?

You don't need to use several typefaces to design a great book cover. A single classic typeface may be all you need. Simply play with formatting and use contrasts. If you use too many typefaces, you will end up with a confusing and distracting result. Moreover, it will look unprofessional. In general, when in doubt, stick with only one classic typeface like in the examples below. For the first example Quicksand typeface is used, but for the second – Antonio. Both are classic typefaces.



If you think that one typeface is not enough for your book cover, don't use more than 3 typefaces. And only one of them can be fancy or decorative. The others must be clean and simple. Whatever typeface you choose for your title, always use a serif or sans serif font for the author's name (no scripts or decorative fonts).

Remember the three main font pairing principles I explained you previously. The fonts must be appropriate to your genre and communicate the emotions you want your book to arise. Research what kind of fonts your genre bestsellers use and find similar ones.

How Many Font Sizes to Use?

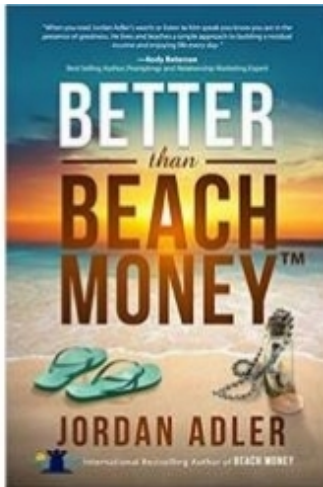
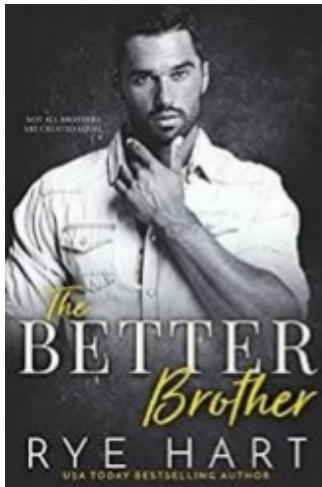
Don't make all the text on your cover in the same size. It will look confusing. Use contrasts and hierarchy to emphasize the most important elements.

Your title will be in the biggest font to create contrast, stand out and be readable even when as a thumbnail. The thumbnail image of your book cover gives the first impression to your readers. Its goal is to communicate the genre of your book and pique their interest. Therefore, you need to make sure that your book title is readable, even when your book cover is reduced to a thumbnail size (about 115 pixels tall). That is very important if you are going to sell your books online. Make your title letter size large and use sharp contrast between the letters and their background to make it easy to read.

The next size is for the author name and/or subtitle. The size of your author name doesn't depend on how famous you are. Look at the bestsellers in your category, whether the author's names are big. If they are, make your name big, too. It doesn't matter if you are not famous yet. Your readers don't know that. You can place your name either in the top or in the bottom of the cover. Choose whatever suits your design concept best.

The third and the smallest size is for additional texts, for instance, your slogan, teaser, tagline, catchy lines or version numbers. Don't worry that your tagline, which usually is in a rather small font, won't be seen on a thumbnail. It doesn't matter. Your reader will read it as the text on the webpage.

If you have words “the, in, of, than, by” and similar ones in your title, you can use the fourth size to make them smaller and less significant like in the examples below.



What Formatting to Use?

Formatting and combination of cases help make accents, build text hierarchy and flow on your book cover. However, don't use too many variations of formatting (italics, bold, ALL CAPS) to avoid clutter. It would reduce readability and confuse your audience.

Recommended for Book Covers:

Upper Case and lower case - in normal weight are comfortable and familiar to read.

ALL CAPS and **BOLD CAPS** – use in large point sizes for your book title. They are easy to read on a thumbnail.

Small Caps - a good alternative when all-caps are too strong.

Italics Upper Case – for making accents, quotes, endorsements and blurbs.

Don't use this formatting on your book cover, because it would make your texts difficult to read: *Italics Small Caps*, **bold lower case**, ***Bold Italics***, ***ALL CAPS ITALICS***, ***BOLD CAPS ITALICS***.

Don't make your text drop shadow or bevel. It will make your book cover look amateurish. I know, there are bestseller books with drop shadow or bevel titles. The difference is that they are designed by highly professional designers and are usually sold in print. If you are not a professional and want to sell your book online, then by using drop shadow or bevel titles, you risk being perceived amateurish and outdated.

7 Ideas for Contrasting Your Typefaces

According to a Canadian typographer, Carl Dair, there are 7 different ways you can contrast types.

1. Size

It's the most basic and simple way to use contrast. Just use a small type with a big type. Usually, this way of contrast is created by making headlines much bigger than the body text.

simple way to use
contrast

2. Weight

Use bold type versus light type of the same style, in order to emphasize a part of the text or create an interesting effect.

bold type versus light type

3. Form

Basically, contrast by form is used every time you use a capital letter together with a lower case. Actually, you are using this contrast every time you write a sentence. You can contrast by form also when using condensed typefaces together with expanded typefaces.

CONTRAST of form

4. Structure

Various typefaces have different letterform and structure. Therefore, the best way to contrast them is by using two typefaces from two different categories of type. For example, you can contrast a sans serif type with a modern typeface or a script. It's advisable not to use two different typefaces from one category on the same page to avoid conflict.

CONTRAST **of structure**

5. Texture

You can create the effect of texture by using lines with text in large blocks. Therefore, the text is perceived as a whole. Experiment with different typefaces and letterforms to get the most interesting result.

texture
texture
contrast **of texture**
texture
texture

6. Color

Like you already read in the chapter about contrast, you can create contrast with colors, too, for example, cool vs. warm, light vs. dark, using complementary colors and so on. Just use the same principles you have already learned in the previous chapter about creating good-looking color

schemes. And don't forget that black-and-white creates the most powerful contrasts.

contrast of color

7. Direction

Every element of a type and letter has a direction. A line with text has a horizontal direction, but a narrow column with a text has a vertical direction. If you contrast them both, you can get a really sophisticated design. You can also mix wide blocks of long lines with tall columns of short lines to create an interesting design.

CONTRAST OF DIRECTION

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persius commune his eu,
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One more way to use the contrast by direction is to put your text diagonally. If you want to create a positive and forward energy, place it with the angle up to the right; if you want to create a downward energy, then with an angle down to the right. Experiment with using both angles on one page to create eye-catching designs. Just don't neglect readability while doing that.



Usually, we use several types of contrasts together. Most often without recognizing we do. Hopefully now, when you have learned about these typographic contrast principles, you will use them consciously and in a more sophisticated way.

Main Principles of Perfecting Your Typefaces

Creating perfect typography is important for your book cover success. Don't ignore this piece of design process. In this chapter, you will learn about three simple secrets to make sure your typography always looks perfect. Use them to make your book cover look professional and sophisticated.

Kerning

Kerning refers to the process of adjusting the space *between two characters*: letter, punctuation, numbers, etc. Usually, it is applied to logos and big titles with the size higher than 20 points. Sometimes, a font's default kerning doesn't look well when certain letter combinations are used. In these cases, you'll want to manually adjust it so the spacing between all the letters looks equal. It doesn't need to be mathematically equal though, but only to create optical illusion that spacing is equal. It's because each letter has its own unique shape (straight-edged and rounded letters) and not always do they perfectly fit together when put in pairs.



Sometimes, a too wide gap between letters may look like a space between two words and break your text. Or two letters may be placed so close

together that become unreadable. The usual examples are letters “r” and “n”. If they are too close to each other, they form the letter “m”. Check out these examples of [bad kerning usage](#).

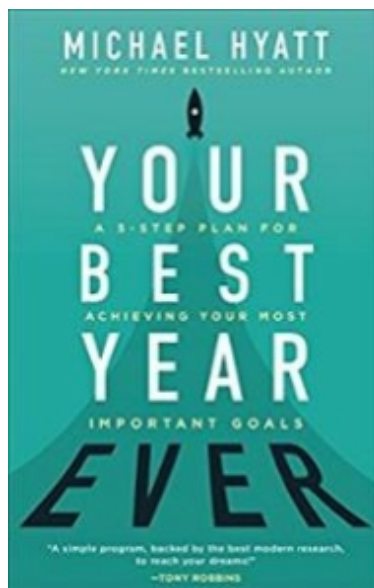
If it’s hard to recognize where you need to make kerning adjustments, flip your title upside down to spot the spacing problems. This will help you to focus on the letterforms and notice which spaces need to be adjusted.

If your software doesn’t provide kerning function, you will need to split your title into letters or letter groups to adjust the spacing manually. However, kerning is applied only to big titles. So, don’t waste your time on large blocks of body text. They don’t need manual kerning, because any kerning problems won’t be visible at small text sizes.

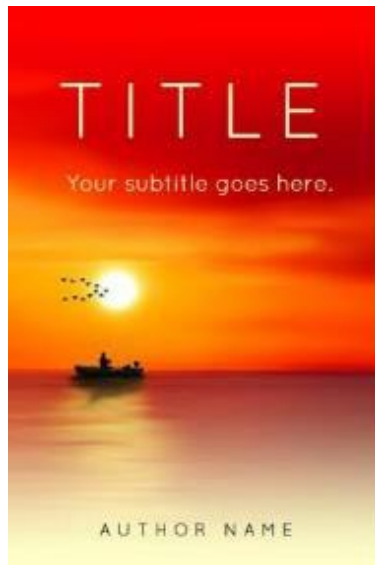
Moreover, kerning should be one of the last steps when creating your design. Only when the final choice regarding your font and formatting has been made, move on to kerning to refine and polish your design. In some cases, it isn’t needed at all.

Tracking

Tracking refers to adjusting the spacing equally between *all the characters* in your text. Rather than adjusting only one pair of letters like with kerning, tracking applies equal spacing to *all* the letters in your chosen text at once. You can adjust spacing in a single word, a sentence, or in whole paragraphs or pages automatically by using the functionality of your image editor. If any tracking is necessary, you'll want to do that before kerning. Increasing the spacing between letters is an easy technique that helps make your book title look more impressive and epic. Like in the example below.



If you have a short title, consider type tracking technique to create a panoramic effect and give a sense of importance or grandeur. It works with author names, too.



However, you should be careful with tracking, because if overused it can lead to difficulty in reading.

Leading

Leading (pronounced "ledding") is the spacing between lines of your text. You already use this setting in your text-editing program every time your text is started in a new row. This is a very simple principle that determines how text is spaced vertically in lines.



If your book title has multiple lines of text, you'll want to make sure there is an appropriate distance between them to make your title readable. If the space is too high or too narrow, you will need to reduce it manually. If your image editor app doesn't provide this function, you will need to create two or three separate title lines and then place them in appropriate distance manually.

Whether you're designing your book cover, a social media ad or a Christmas greeting card, it's worth knowing these basic typography concepts and how to apply them to your designs. Kerning, Tracking and Leading are important in typography and should not be ignored. It is the finishing touch on your designs that makes everything easily readable and professionally looking. Consider these techniques before completing every book cover

design. However, it doesn't mean that you always need to apply them. Not always they are necessary.

10 Resources to Download Free Fonts

Like we already discussed before, choosing a typeface is an important part of the book cover design process. One of the main goals of the typeface is to communicate the genre of your book and evoke emotions in the reader. It can help you emphasize mood and emotions of the message you want to convey to your audience. The bad news is that the selection of standard fonts that are available on your computer is limited. The good news is that you can add new fonts to your computer easily and free of charge. There is really a wide variety of free fonts available in different resources. I have listed some of them below. However, there is a ton of paid fonts, too. So, if you don't find what you are looking for in free resources, then look for paid fonts. Simply search for them on Google.

1. [Google Fonts](#) – search by numerous font categories and choose exactly what you like.
2. [Dafont](#) – browse fonts by alphabetical listing, by style, by author or by popularity.
3. [1001 Free Fonts](#) – Graffiti, Halloween, Gothic, Fantasy – these are just a few of fancy fonts categories you can choose from. Check them out!
4. [Font Space](#) – a collection of over 31,000 free fonts shared by designers around the world.
5. [Fontsqureel](#) – hand-selected typefaces that are presented in an easy-to-use format.
6. [Urban Fonts](#) – nearly 8,000 free fonts to choose from.
7. [Font Zone](#) – thousands of free fonts to enhance your own websites, documents, greeting cards, and more. You can browse popular fonts by themes, name or style.

8. [Font Bundles](#) – beautiful and stylish fonts that you can get for free.
9. [Behance](#) – huge selection of stylish fonts. Pay with a Tweet and get any of them.
10. [Ffonts](#) – choose from 14, 000 fonts and use them as you wish.

When you are using the category filters on free font sites, check out their "Display" selections where possible. Download a few that interest you and play around with them. And remember to read the License terms.

If you also want to learn about other free tools that you can use for creating visuals, get this book: “[100+ Free Tools to Create Visuals for Web & Social Media](#)”. You can download it for free from my webpage.

Typeface Licenses Explained

Similarly like with photos and vector files, you need to make sure you are allowed to use the typefaces downloaded from the Internet. Including the web pages I listed before. Typefaces are considered as software and they should be treated like any other software license. Many free fonts are licensed for personal use only and do not include a commercial license. It may also happen that the license prohibits you from using the font in certain commercial works like in a logo but allow you to use it for other purposes. So, always check out the license terms before you use the font for your book cover.

If you use unlicensed font, it may happen that you will not be able to embed it in your pdf file, which is necessary to make sure that your fonts will look the same when the file is opened on other computers. Moreover, it's an intellectual property violation. There are cases when design agencies have been sued for using unlicensed fonts.

How to Install New Typefaces on Your Computer?

In case you are wondering how to technically add a new font to your computer, it's actually very easy. So, don't be afraid. You don't need to be a tech geek or a designer to do that. Just go to any website that I listed before, choose the font you like and download it. [Watch this video tutorial](#). And remember to read the license terms of each font to make sure you can use them for commercial use.

Choose the Right Book Cover Size and Image Resolution

eBook Cover Dimensions Explained

There is no golden rule for cover dimensions, because different bookstores require different sizes, but e-reader devices have different resolutions. However, you don't need to worry about it too much, as long as you are using the right ratio and high-resolution images. Let's look at the recommended sizes for books published on Amazon.

- **Kindle Direct Publishing recommended size** — 2,560 x 1,600 (1.6 aspect ratio)

The Amazon store is rather flexible when it comes to the range of cover sizes that authors can upload to their product page. These are their recommendations: *“The ideal size of your eBook cover art is a height/width ratio of 1.6:1. This means that for every 1,000 pixels in width, the image should be 1,600 pixels in height. To ensure the best quality for your image, particularly on high definition devices, the height of the image should be at least 2,500 pixels. Ideal dimensions for cover files are 2,560 x 1,600 pixels.”*

- **Novels and Non-Fiction** — 2400px x 1600px (1.5 aspect ratio)

Non-fiction books usually have a bit wider cover than Amazon's recommended size, because it gives more space for the design elements, which is important when you're displaying them in thumbnail size.

But you can use this ratio also for non-fiction books for the same reason.

- **Illustrated Books** — 2,800px x 3,920px (1.4 aspect ratio) or 3,000px x 3,600px (1.2 aspect ratio)

In general, illustrated books such as photography, art, children and cookery books tend to have wider covers to help the cover photographs and illustrations to stand out.

- **Audiobooks** — 3,200px x 3,200px (1:1 aspect ratio)

Audiobook covers usually look like a square and therefore have a 1:1 aspect ratio. If you decide to record an audiobook after the launch of your original book, don't simply crop the regular book cover. Instead, adapt its design to the required format.

In most cases, the sizes and aspect ratios given above also work on other online bookstores. However, if you want to adapt your book cover for a specific store, check out their requirements first. Since they change every now and then, I won't list them here.

Printed Books

Now, let's have a look at terms and regulations for printed books.

What is Trim Size?

If you are new to self-publishing, you may not know what the trim size is. During the printing process, the book pages are printed on large sheets which are folded, glued, and later “trimmed” to a specific size. This is why it’s called trim size. In simple words, trim size is a term that is used when speaking about the dimensions of your printed book.

There aren’t any rules regarding the dimensions of a printed book. They are determined by many factors. Different sources make different suggestions. Therefore, if you are going to use a print-on-demand service (POD), you will need to find out what cover dimension options they offer. Just keep in mind that they usually charge for the number of pages. Therefore, the smaller the page, the more expensive it’s going to be.

The two largest POD services in the world - IngramSpark and Createspace/KDP Print will require you to submit a cover design that includes the front cover, the back cover, the spine, and bleeds.

How to Calculate the Width and Height?

When setting up the cover design file, the **width** can be calculated by adding:

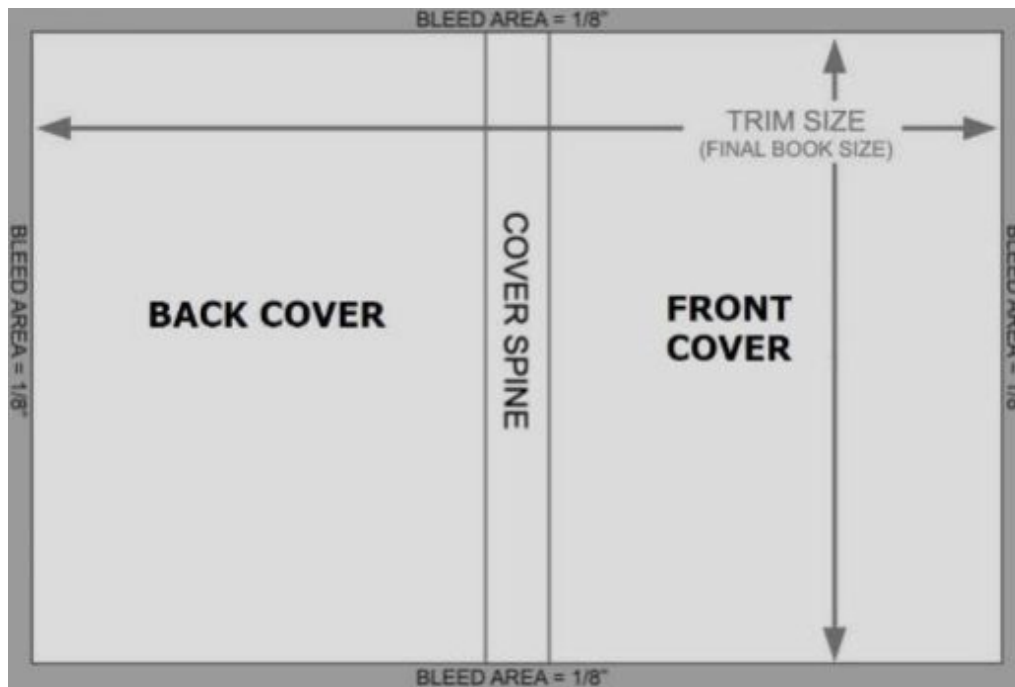
- **2 x Trim Width** - front and back cover.

- **Spine Width.** This needs to be well calculated. [Use this IngramSpark calculator](#) to get the exact spine width size based on your page count and paper thickness. For Create Space, use the formula described [here](#).
- **2 x Bleed.** Bleed is an additional extension of your design by 0.125” (3mm) to all sides of the page. It is necessary to run images to the edge of a printed page. Since there is a degree of movement when printing on any press, if you do not add bleed, any misalignment while cutting will result in the artwork not running to the edge of the paper. Therefore, your book will have a white area around images or even cover and a cheap look. Add a bleed area to avoid this.

The book **height** can be calculated by finding the sum of:

- Trim Height
- 2 x Bleed. 0.125” or 3mm, typically.

Look at the picture below and you will see how your book cover layout should look when prepared for print.



If you have hired a professional designer, he will do this for you. But if you're making the cover yourself, you need to find out the precise requirements of POD service you have chosen and make sure that you are using the correct settings.

What Software and Apps to Use for Creating Your Book Cover Design?

There are many software and apps you can use for creating your book cover design. Your choice mainly depends on your skills and abilities. If you are skillful in PhotoShop, Adobe Illustrator or Corel Draw, use them. The disadvantage of these software is that they are rather expensive. If you are not going to use them professionally, most probably it's not worth investing in them.

Instead, you can choose from these tools listed below. Most of them are free.

1. [GIMP](#) – this free software has rather similar functionality to Photoshop, which means that it works the best for picture (bitmap) retouching and editing. It has fewer features than Photoshop, however, is functional enough for creating a book cover. If you don't know how to use it, search for video tutorials on YouTube.
2. [Inkscape](#) – this software has similar functionality to Adobe Illustrator and CorelDraw. It is used for creating or editing vector graphics such as illustrations, diagrams, line arts, charts, logos and others. If you don't know how to use it, you will need to spend some time [learning](#) it first.
3. [PowerPoint](#) – the easiest software to use and won't cost you a dime if you already have it on your computer. If you don't, you can use its free trial version or [subscribe](#) for all MS Office products just for \$7.99/month. If you are already familiar with PowerPoint, then you

will need to learn just a few more features to be able to use it for creating your book cover design. Watch this [short tutorial on YouTube](#) to see how it works in practice. You can use PowerPoint for creating vector graphics and also for doing simple photo editing. If you want to learn more about PowerPoint functionality, [enroll in my course on Udemy](#). Also [download these 9 pre-designed PowerPoint templates](#) that you can customize for creating mockups and promo visuals for your books.

4. [Canva](#) – online app that offers many easily editable book cover design templates to choose from. All you need to do is drag and drop the elements of your design, change colors and fonts. However, if you choose using Canva, be sure to customize the templates offered and follow the principles I’m going to describe in this book. Otherwise, you can end up with a book cover that looks generic and cheap. I have noticed some book covers on Amazon that are created with Canva. How do I know that they are made with Canva? Because their authors haven’t changed *anything* in their templates. They have simply inserted their titles and published the cover as it is. Or they have used patterns and templates that immediately associate with Canva. It looks cheap. Moreover, anybody can use the same template and your book cover won’t be original at all. I’m personally not a big fan of using Canva templates, because I feel like they limit my creativity. I would rather use them for inspiration only. But if Canva works for you, it’s great.
5. [Pixlr](#)–free online app that is an alternative to Photoshop and Gimp. The advantage is you don’t need to install it. Good for photo editing and working with picture layers.
6. [PicMonkey](#).- free online app that offers design templates, picture effects, great selection of fonts and user-friendly interface. It used to be free, but not anymore. Now its costs start from 5.99 USD/month.

If you also want to learn about other free tools that you can use for creating visuals, get this book: “[100+ Free Tools to Create Visuals for Web & Social Media](#)”. You can download it for free from my webpage.

5 Ways to Test Your Book Cover Design

According to the study conducted by Carleton University (Canada) in 2006, a web page has 50 milliseconds to impress and engage a user landing on it for the first time. This study shows that our brain can make immediate judgments almost as fast as the eye can take in the information. Later Google also conducted a [study](#) and confirmed the 50 ms number. In fact, according to Google study, some opinions develop even within 17 milliseconds. British [researchers analyzed](#) how different design and information content factors influence trust of online health sites and found out that first impressions are 94% design related. Their study showed that look and feel of the website is the main influencer of the first impression.

How are all these studies related with book cover design? Similarly, like websites, books that are sold online also have a very limited time to make the first impression. The chances are your potential reader will look at your book cover's thumbnail and make his mind up within the first twentieth of a second. This is how much time you have for attracting attention, getting your message across, and triggering interest in your reader.

1. Blink test

In the web design field, a blink test is used to make sure that the web page makes good first impression and communicates the main message fast. The test participant is shown a page for five seconds. Then the page is hidden, and the participant is asked to share what his initial impression was and what he can recall. Therefore, researchers can find out what information and visual

elements resonate with their respondents within those first 5 seconds. You can use the same test for your book cover design. Show your cover to your friends, family members or preferably somebody who represent your target audience for five seconds. Then hide the image and ask what feelings and associations it arose and what they remember about it – texts, visual elements. Ask yourself – is this the impression you wanted to make? If yes, you have moved one step further. If no, maybe you should consider redesigning.

2. Do Comparison

Copy several bestselling book covers in your genre on Amazon. Then put them all on a sheet of paper together with your book cover. Hide the author names. Ask other people – your friends, family or your target audience to vote on them. If in most cases, they pick your cover without knowing that it is yours, it's great. If they pick it at least as often as any other cover, it's OK, too. If nobody picks your cover, then you should improve it.

3. Create a Mockup

Sometimes it happens that your book cover looks great when on your computer screen but doesn't look so well when published on Amazon and seen in the list of search results. You may find out that it has become hard to notice when compared to other competing titles in your genre. Create a web mockup to avoid this. Search for your keyword on Amazon and then make a print screen of the search page. Open it in an image-editing app and place your book cover as a thumbnail on one of the search results. Therefore, you will see how it would look like on the search results page when published

without actually publishing it. Do your own evaluation. Are you happy with the result?

4. Do A/B Tests

If you have made several book cover designs and want to find out which would convert better, consider doing A/B test. In general, it means that you produce two versions of the same ad but with one small difference to see the impact of that change. It's a widely used technique in marketing. The smaller the change, the more precise your finding will be. You can test either two absolutely different book cover concepts, for example, photography versus flat design; or some small changes, like title font and size, color scheme or composition. An essential prerequisite of a successful A/B campaign is that all variations of the ad or landing page must be shown during the same time period and to the audience that corresponds to the same demographic criteria. It's necessary to get reliable data. Otherwise, your results can be impacted by other factors, for example, because in different time periods, user activity differs, or because one ad is mostly shown to young women, but the other – to elderly men. And their preferences differ. Therefore, you cannot compare the results. When A/B test is being done, each variation of the ad or landing page is shown to different users of the same audience. Therefore, every user sees only one variation of the ad and doesn't even know that other variations also exist.

There are several ways you can do A/B tests:

- **Facebook ads-** create a Facebook A/B test ad with your book cover variations and thoroughly choose your target audience (location, gender, age, interests). You can be really precise on Facebook with this. Remember to link the add to your landing page where the book can be

downloaded (either bookstore or your own webpage). Publish your ad and see which of the covers earn more clicks. Remember, that you need to create ads with identical copy and target audience. The only difference is the cover image displayed in the ad. Run your ads for a week or at least several days and then evaluate results. The cover that earns more clicks on the download button is the winner and should be used as your book cover.

- **Your website** - do a similar A/B test on your own website, too. Set up a landing page with your book offer. If you use tools like [LeadPages](#), [Instapage](#) or similar, you will be able to create two or more versions of the same landing page to do A/B test. While leaving all the other information the same, use different book cover images in each version of the page. Then drive traffic to your landing page and evaluate the results. If you are running a test with two-page variants, your landing page tool will split the traffic 50/50. Then analyze results and see which of the book covers worked better and generated more conversions.
- **Email campaign** – do you have readers who have subscribed to your mailing list? If yes, create an email campaign to promote your book and do the A/B test simultaneously. Simply split your list into two with identical subscriber number and send a newsletter with a different book cover to each list. All the texts and titles should be identical in both emails. The only difference would be your book cover. It's important to include a link to your book download page so that you can see the click-through-rate and see which book cover generated more conversions.
- **Poll** - if you have a website that is visited by the target audience of your book, you can run a poll on your own website. The advantage is that you'll get responses from the people most likely to purchase your book. If you decide to run a poll, you can use either a poll plugin or

rating plugin to collect results, or simply encourage visitors to write their choice as a comment. For example, you can use [FreeOnlineSurveys.com](https://www.freeonline-surveys.com/), [SurveyMonkey](https://www.surveymonkey.com/), [Help Me Choose a Cover](https://www.helpmechoose.com/) or any other similar tool. Promote your poll to your followers on social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and others) and to your email list, if you have one. Collect the results and choose the winner.

The difference between the A/B test and poll is that in case of A/B test, your respondents see only one version of book cover design, but in case of poll – they see all their versions and choose the version they like the most. A/B tests give quantitative results but polls – qualitative results. You can combine both methods to get the most valid insights.

What Thousand Words the Cover Says About Your Book?

You probably have heard the idiom that the picture is worth a thousand words. If we consider your book cover as a picture, what thousand words it says about you and your book cover? If you have already published books, look at their covers and ask yourself these questions.

- Is it clear what genre they represent?
- Do they pop-out and attract attention?
- What message do they communicate to your audience?
- Are the titles legible even when reduced to the thumbnail size?
- Do your book covers have something in common? Is it good or bad?
- Do you feel proud of them?
- Would they drive attention if placed near the bestsellers of your genre or would they go unnoticed?

These and many other questions you need to ask yourself when analyzing your book cover design. The same applies when you are creating a new book cover. Be critical and as objective as possible. Find a bestselling book in your genre with a cover you like and compare it with your own book cover. Which of them looks better and pops-out more?

Since you have come to the end of this book, now you should know the principles and techniques you can use to create a professionally-looking book

cover design that clearly represents its genre. Moreover, you now have a step by step system for creating book cover designs that will attract your target audience. I recommend you keep this book as a reference. You may also want to go back through it from time to time at different stages of your book cover designing process.

To get the results fast, take everything you learned from this book and put it into action in the real world as fast as possible. In my opinion, this is the best way to do things and develop new skills. Now it's your turn. Implement your knowledge and start creating your designs. Be creative and have fun!

Thanks for reading. Please [leave a review](#) so I know what you enjoyed the most about this book and can improve its content, if you felt like something was missing. If you want to be notified when I publish new books, please [follow me on Amazon](#).

Anita

P.S. If you enjoyed what you learned in this eBook and you want to master PowerPoint features and techniques that you can use for creating book cover designs, their mockups and other visuals, enroll in my online course: “[Ultimate Book Cover Design with PowerPoint](#)”. As my reader, you will get a nice discount.

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